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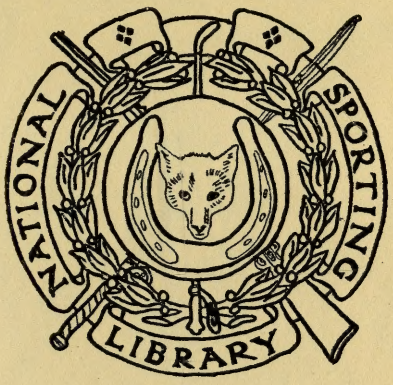

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RECREATIONS IN SHOOTING.

Katherine Proctor
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W. HARVEY, DEL.

FRED. W. BRANSTON, SC.

RECREATIONS IN SHOOTING:

WITH SOME ACCOUNT

OF

THE GAME OF THE BRITISH ISLANDS.

BY CRAVEN.

With Sixty-two Embellishments, Engraved on Wood by FREDERICK W. BRANSTON,

From Original Drawings by WILLIAM HARVEY.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 186 STRAND.

MDCCCXLVI.

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VIZETELLY BROTHERS AND CO. PRINTERS AND ENGRAVERS,

PETERBOROUGH COURT, 135 FLEET STREET.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following pages are meant literally "to teach the young idea how to *shoot*," and to set forth a popular sport in the character of a rational rural recreation. No such work had yet been written. Colonel Hawker, indeed, calls his amusing and thoroughly practical volume, "Instructions to Young Sportsmen;" but as a class book, it is only suited to a school for grown children. A youth ambitious of the Scottish moors, or to essay his *devoir* among the pheasants and partridges, cares as little about "a self-acting machine for turning the insides of gun-barrels," as for the internal economy of a self-acting piano, or a barrel-organ. We have, therefore, in this our Manual for the young shooter, eschewed all allusion to the haberdashery of his pastime; and, supposing him equipped as befits his purpose, have taken him abroad to "flood and field," introduced him to their boon populace, and—bade him good speed!

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

"Thus much may serve by way of proem."—SWIFT.

FROM what source springs that human instinct which, for the want of a better term, we call a taste for Sporting? Is it because while life is epicene—vibrating between petticoats and trowsers—the child is delivered over to Nature, that we find the boy ever contriving means for the circumvention of the denizens of "flood and field?" Seek him even in innermost Cockaigne, where, in strange apparel, under the denomination of a Blue-coat scholar, his piscatory experience has been haply confined to Burgess's essence of anchovies, his practical ornithology to the study of the sparrow on the house-top—mark the youth, we say, in circumstances which shall have limited his familiarity with the creatures of the waters to

pickled salmon and Yarmouth bloaters—his intercourse with game, to an autumnal brace of birds and bread sauce,—and you discover him shaping a pin into the "weak invention" of a hook, or, armed with a pop-gun, giving token of the spirit which presently shall move him up to the blue Highlands and the purple Moors,

> "Where the hunter of deer, and the warrior, trode
> To his hills, that encircle the sea."

The pastimes of stream and woodland, champain and valley, are the characteristic exercises of many of the noblest properties of man's nature. They call into exertion courage, perseverance, sagacity, strength, activity, caution: they are the wholesome machinery of excitement: of hope and fear, joy and sorrow, regret and rejoicing: they are at once the appetite and the food of manhood. The progress of science and civilization has taken from the pursuit of field sports many of the natural and moral ills to which they were once exposed. Instead of being antagonist meanings, the sportsman and the gentleman are become synonymous terms. It is an excellent thing that the youth of England may now adopt the hale bold pastimes, which have ever been

peculiar to their country, without prejudice to their manners or morals: it is pleasant that they can do so, "with all appliances and means to boot," which their requirements or convenience can stand in need of. The following pages, addressed particularly to this class, are designed, with the view to advance still further the social and liberal character of rural sports. Not only do they aspire "to teach the young idea how to *shoot*;" but to afford it familar introduction to the history, genealogy, and idiosyncrasy of the tribes with which it may come in contact. Humble as the claims of their author upon the reader may be, they will escape utter repudiation, for sake of the spirit in which they were written: small as his hopes are of reaching the point of his ambition, the manner of his work essays to realise the principle, which he has made his maxim in its construction,

"Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci."

The natural history of the game of the British Islands—in an illustrated form—is an undertaking in keeping with the spirit of the day. It provides for the prevailing taste for embellished works in an especial degree, because the feeblest

efforts of description are those which attempt to convey correct ideas of persons or things. We are not, indeed, without books, which help us to portraits, as well as the natural history of our social *feræ*—so to call modern game; but there does not exist a volume confined to the subject, or which professes to deal with it alone and completely. We cannot complain of any scarcity of sporting literature; but the young disciple of the trigger, the youth who would know how to comport and enjoy himself on moor or stubble, in cover or canoe, is unprovided with a Hand-book. Colonel Hawker has certainly written eight editions of "Instructions for Young Sportsmen;" but, like other devices of instruction, they seem more fitted for a task than a recreation. His amusement of wild fowl shooting, superficially appears as little like fun as anything that can be imagined. According to the gallant Colonel's account, it is necessary for the performer to wrap himself up in a cere-cloth, like an Egyptian mummy, to avoid being "ruined with the frequent mixture of salt water, blood, mud, and gunpowder!" The young sportsman is thus advertised as to the preparation of his holyday suit: "Make with Russia-duck, a loose, over-all frock-coat, and a hood, or a cap

with a flap behind, similar to a coal-heaver's hat, and dress them as follows:—Take three quarts of linseed oil, and boil them till reduced to two quarts and a half, the doing which will require about three hours, and when the oil is sufficiently boiled, it will burn a feather. The addition of some Indian rubber was suggested to me, but of this I did not make a trial, because the dressing answered so well without it. When the oil is quite cold, take a clean paint brush, and well work it into the outside of the whole apparel, and it will soon find its way to the inside. Let the apparel then be put out in the air every dry day for a fortnight or three weeks; and, at the expiration of that time, provided the oil on it be thoroughly dry, take the remainder of your prepared oil, and give it the second coat.—N.B. Let the person who boils the oil, &c., beware of getting burnt, and let him do it out of doors, *or he might run a risk of setting your house on fire;* add to this, *the smell of it, when boiling, is a great nuisance.*" O! ingenuous youth! what think ye of dressing thus for a pleasure party?

Before our neophyte enters on his pleasant craft, it will be convenient to furnish him with fitting materials. Chiefest of these, are his dog

and his gun. Elsewhere he will find hints how best to supply himself with the former: we will here address ourself to counsel him touching the latter, and its necessary appurtenances. For your gun—of course a double-barrel percussion—go to the best artist in such articles within compass of your pocket. Leave to him all matters of finish—all quality of the instrument—and, as regards choice, adopt to the letter the advice of Horace to the youth about to rush into verse:—

> "Sumite *materiam* vestris, qui scribitis, equam
> Viribus: et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,
> Quid valeant *humeri*."

The great names in the Metropolitan gun trade are those of Manton, Egg, Moore, Nock, Smith, Purdey, Westley Richards—represented by his agent, Bishop, of Bond Street,—and last, but certainly not least, in our good opinion, Joseph Lang, of the Haymarket:

> "Cum multis aliis quos nunc," &c.

Comparisons are proverbially odious, and we therefore eschew them, merely remarking, that not being hard to please, we should be content to have our wicked will in the preserves of Holkham or Henham, with the best double detonator any one of these might turn out.

Being supplied with a gun, we next come to advise our young sportsman upon his supply of powder: the vital principle of shooting. If originally of a good quality, this agent will last unimpaired for a very great length of time—always premising that its being kept perfectly dry is a *sine quâ non*. If once allowed to become damp, your powder can never be restored to its first excellence; as moisture dissolves, more or less, the materials which give it strength. Even the air has a tendency to produce, or, at all events, quickly to instil, damp into saltpetre; therefore, to preserve your powder, in all its original properties, keep it hermetically sealed in *tin* cases, which are infinitely the best. A great deal has lately been written upon the granulation of gunpowder, and other subtilties of this composition; but, for all ordinary sporting purposes, get the best quality of any recognised manufacturer, and you may be sure of an article suitable to all your wants: Curtis and Harvey; Pigou and Co.—Try their wares, and if your piece do n't carry straight, be sure the fault is not in the propelling principle.

Much diversity of opinion prevails as to the best general charge for a gun—to our thinking, there can be no rule for any such thing. First

subject it to a patient series of trials at a target; and, having accurately proved the heaviest charge it will carry, with the best effect—shooting close and true—adopt that as your loading. Some years ago the correct proportions were declared to be, an equal measure of powder and shot; while some of the great professors, in their pigeon matches, used only four drams of powder to two ounces of shot — No. 4. Where game does not abound, we would recommend the use of heavy charges; because when a bird is hit, it is hit hard: in preserves, less ammunition will do. It must always be borne in mind, that the heavier the charge, the more quickly a barrel becomes foul.

As a principle, let the substance of the wadding be regulated by the bore of the gun. Let it also be elastic, and of a texture sufficiently solid to resist the blast of the powder. The article of wadding is sold everywhere that powder and shot are to be had; and the great gun manufacturers have fitting contrivances of the sort, in vast varieties. But there is not one of them better than felt for large, and strong pasteboard for small, bores. Keep these as dry as your powder; and ram your wadding, whatever it may be made of, well down upon both your powder and

your shot. Before ramming it home over the latter, give your gun a gentle blow upon the ground, to make the shot lie even. The sooner you re-load after firing the better: do it always while the barrel is still warm. Of course, the last thing you will do in loading is, to put on the caps.

It will not be enough that the charger of your powder-flask has been accurately adjusted to the measure of your charge, for you must take care it is also fairly filled. To do this, place your finger upon the top of it sufficiently firm to prevent the powder from spilling, but not so as to force it into the charger; then turn your flask upside down, give it a shake, and you will have your just complement.

The size of shot is another fertile subject of discussion among sportsmen. Some have gone so far, in their desire to settle the question, as to have pigeons plucked for the purpose of ascertaining to what extent feathers affect the penetration of shot. Without leading our student into refinements of theory as abstruse as this unpleasant process of plucking—word untuneful to a student's ear—we venture to propound, for his acceptance, the fruit of our personal experience. In countries where game may be ap-

proached within reasonable distance, let him load the right barrel with No. 6, and the left with No. 4: the latter to come to the rescue after a miss with the first; as, of course, heavy shot kills at longer distances than light. Should he prefer shot of one size, then let him use No. 5. Perhaps it may be as well not to confuse his practice by projectiles of various sorts: and a good authority declares, that for a shooter who goes out for his morning's recreation, to shoot game at fair sporting distances only, like a gentleman, without any regard to destroying everything he shoots at, this is the best and most sportsman-like plan; shot of this medium size being adapted to all seasons, and to all sorts of game, except snipes. Some shooters mix their shot; which certainly is not to be recommended.

As it is assumed that the gun used by the young sportsman is a detonator, we will add a word as to the choice and proof of the percussion cap, which will fill up the catalogue of his field necessaries; and conclude with a set of rules, constructed, for the management of his shooting equipage, by the celebrated gunmaker, Purdey. Let your stock of caps be of the best quality: to test their composition, and ascertain whether

they contain any fulminating mercury—a most dangerous ingredient, which causes them to explode with great violence—throw a few into the fire. If they then explode with a loud report, reject them as unfit for use. Excellent caps, however, may be counted on by those who deal, for their shooting apparatus, with established houses, and tradesmen of character.

DIRECTIONS FOR PERSONS USING DETONATING GUNS.

Load with the cocks down. When ramming down shot, observe the distance the end of the brass worm is from the muzzle of the barrel, to prevent overcharging. Always ram down hard.

Prime the last thing; otherwise, in ramming down the wadding, the powder will be driven into the caps, and become so firmly compressed as to destroy their effect.

Should the caps be put on by mistake prior to loading, force them off with a turnscrew, and replace them with new ones.

Never put the cocks down upon the caps when the gun is loaded, as it compresses and spoils the detonating powder, and is very dangerous; the cock being liable to be lifted up, by catching hold of any substance, and then falling, will explode the gun; but if left at half-cock, it cannot possibly happen.

Keep the copper caps dry; if exposed to the fire for a few minutes, when required for use, in damp weather, they will never fail. Take care that no oil or grease get to them.

The caps made with the purified detonating powder should always be used in preference to those which are made with fulminating mercury, and called "anti-corrosive." This powder is dangerous, as it inflames with a very slight pressure, and detonates with such extreme violence as frequently to burst the shields of the cocks, and split the pegs, and wear them out in a quarter of the time the other does: it is likewise very foul, and will not keep. It also injures the inside of the barrels and breeches.

From the peculiar construction of detonating locks, they should not be snapped either with or without the copper caps, but in the act of shooting. When the gun is loaded, the flash from the detonating powder never enters the inside of the barrel; but if snapped upon the caps, when the gun is unloaded, it drives the detonating gas into the barrels, which creates rust; and if done without the caps, the works are liable to be injured, by reason of the cocks meeting no resistance in their fall, as in flint locks.

The detonating pegs will last a season's hard shooting, but should by no means be used after the holes are worn large by repeated firing; as it will weaken the force of the gun, and damage the locks.

DIRECTIONS FOR TAKING LOCKS TO PIECES, AND PUTTING THEM TOGETHER AGAIN.

[Be careful not to mix the screws.]

Let down the cock.

Cramp the main-spring sufficiently to remove it.

Take off the bridle.

Press scear against scear-spring with the fore-finger and thumb of the left or right hand, according as the lock may be a left or a right side one; and having, with the fore-finger of the other hand, pushed back the cock as far as it will go, let the scear-spring go back gently, when the pivot of the scear is easily lifted out of the hole, and the scear taken out.

Turn out the scear-spring screw, and take out the spring.

Unscrew and take off the cock.

Take out the tumbler.

To put them together again, put in tumbler, and screw on cock, so as to be down.

Put cock rather backwards, and screw on scear-spring.

Push cock as far back as it will go: put pivot of scear into its proper hole; and then taking hold of scear with the thumb, and of the top of the cock with the fore-finger of the right hand, if a right-hand lock (and *vice versâ* if a left), compress the spring, and move the cock forwards and down.

Push forward the swivel, so that it may not interfere with the screw, and drawing the cock a little forwards, slip the two holes in the bridle upon the heads of the scear and tumbler pivot, and screw on the bridle.

Having let down the cock, and pushed forward the swivel as far as it will go, cramp the main-spring, hook the end of it on the swivel, move it up into its place on the lock-plate, and unscrew the cramp.

These directions will be found of service in the ordinary arrangements and details of shooting gear. The process of washing, drying, and preparing the gun for use is too familiar to need a place in the hand-book of the veriest tyro in rural sports.

W. HARVEY, DEL.

FRED. W. BRANSTON, SC.

DEER STALKING.

DEER-HOUNDS.

CHAPTER I.

DEER-STALKING.

"Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum."

"It is not every man's luck," says Horace, "to go to Corinth:" in like manner only here and there a sportsman has the fortune to try his hand at deer-stalking—

to taste the highest flavour of shooting known to the British islands. But that is no reason the cunning of the noble pastime should not be set before him. On the contrary, because his opportunities of indulging in it—if, indeed, he ever have any—will most certainly be "few and far between," the best means of insuring success, should the chance occur, ought to be made available to him. Details of its stirring scenes and associations, the economy of its perilous pleasure, while exciting his interest, will serve to tell how stags were won—and, it may be, enable him to do so likewise: to this we address ourselves.

The sport of deer-stalking, as pursued in Great Britain, is followed only in certain portions of the Scottish Highlands; for though stags are shot in the royal chases in England, as well as in private parks, the method of doing so is far from sporting, and the practice confined to game-keepers. The principal districts where stalking is enjoyed are Athol Forest, the Sutherland Forests, the Forest of Marr, the Forest of Corrichbach, Lord Lovat's Ross-shire haunts, Glenfiddich and Gaick in the county of the Gordon, Glenartney, besides others of less note. The former of these, Mr. Scrope states, contains an area of one hundred thousand acres, and is upwards of forty miles in length: it has, however, only recently been devoted to the rearing and preserving of red deer. The Sutherland Forests are fifty miles long, and embrace some of the wildest scenery of Scotland. It

was in these wilds, according to the same authority, that the last of the British wolves surrendered the ghost. The Forest of Marr is remarkable for the attempt made by its proprietor, the Earl of Fife, to introduce the wild boar into the catalogue of British game. He turned out several of these savage porkers, but it is supposed they departed this life from the want of acorns.

Extensive, however, as the stalking grounds are, they belong to a few great proprietors, who limit their permission to share with them the royal sport to a few great men. Only two individuals so favoured have left us any record of their proceedings,—these are Mr. Scrope, already referred to, and Mr. John Colquhoun, of Luss. The latter gentleman is quite an enthusiast in all relating to the wild pastimes of his mountain home, and writes of deer-stalking not only as a thoroughly practical hand at it, but as one well skilled in the fashion in which those about entering on the campaign should take the field.

"The most propitious day for this sport," he says, "is a cloudy one, with blinks of sunshine; exactly such as you would choose for fishing. When the sky is cloudless, and the sun very dazzling, the herd are apt to see you at a great distance, and take alarm. High and changing wind is always very bad, as it keeps them moving about in a wild and uneasy state. In such weather it is better, if possible, to wait till it settles a little, and take advantage of the first calm. If the breeze be light they will not move much, but

a strong, steady wind, lasting for some days, will always make the deer change their ground, by facing it often for miles. Mist is the worst of all, for the deer are pretty sure to see you before you see them. Always advance on deer from above, as they are much less apt to look up than down a hill. If possible have the sun at your back and in their face: with this advantage you may even venture to approach them from below. Birds, on the contrary, always look up, and it is best to stalk them from the lower ground. If it is a quiet spot, even if the sun is at your back, wait for a clear blink before making your near approach. Of course every one knows that it is out of the question, under any circumstances, to attempt advancing on deer unless the wind be favourable; so all other directions are subject to this.

"In corries and hollows it is quite impossible to know how the wind will blow upon a particular point, unless you have marked every change of wind upon every point of the corrie. After deer have been stalked and shot at, they become much wilder; the best sport with the old harts is therefore obtained at the beginning of the season. They generally keep together, and when their stately mien and branching antlers are seen in the distance, it is enough to inspirit the most apathetic: but when told to cock his double-barrelled rifle, I could well excuse a novice for being scarcely able to obey. When there are hinds in the herd, they often present themselves between you and the unsuspecting harts; but even should

they be at a distance, great caution is necessary, as if one hind gets a glimpse of the crouching enemy, the whole herd, stags and all, are sure to scamper away, amidst the bitter execrations of the forester upon its hornless head.

"The next best time for a shot at a fine old stag, after they have become wild, is about the beginning of October, when each lot of hinds is sure to contain a good hart. The chances may then not often be so good, but, from the stags being dispersed, there are more of them. If deer are feeding forward, it requires very nice calculation, when at a distance, to know the point they will arrive at by the time you have neared them, especially as a gust of wind or a shower of rain will quicken their motions. But if the stalker is not far from the herd, which is feeding up to his place of concealment with a favourable wind, he should not grudge waiting; for, by sending round drivers to the windward of the deer, they are often apt to turn and face them. I can't say that driving, under any circumstances, gives half the pleasure that stalking does: for my own part, I would rather kill one stalked hart than several driven.

"Driving, however, upon a large scale, has a most imposing effect; and although it cannot be otherwise than injurious to a forest, yet the exhilarating nature of the whole proceedings, in which so many friends may join, often makes the proprietor overlook the consternation and panic it creates among the wild and timid herd. Some part of the forest is selected

to which the deer are to be driven: a great number of hill men and shepherds, who thoroughly understand what they are about, are then sent to the farthest extremity to bring all the deer they can collect to this spot: the passes, of course, being well known, are occupied by the sportsmen with their rifles. The drivers sometimes hallooing, and sometimes giving their wind, gradually contract their circle, the deer are huddled together, and finding the only clear ground in the direction of the rifles, slowly and cautiously take their doomed way. There is often great difficulty in driving them, as they are always obliged to go with the wind, which their natural instinct of self-preservation makes them very unwilling to do, and, if they possibly can, they always face it."

The implements of the deer-stalker are his rifle, his telescope, and his hounds. Of these latter, Mr. Colquhoun says, that Lord Breadalbane has a very superior kennel. They are for the most part a breed between the foxhound and greyhound, but some are between the deerhound and foxhound. The former are reckoned the best winded. His lordship's forester sets great store by them, and tells you that when choosing a cold, that is, an unwounded hart, in company with hinds, they are so knowing, that should the hart give them the slip at a burn or mountain stream, and run down it, they stop their pursuit of the hinds, recover his track, and hold him at bay all night, should no one come to their relief. That no

inferior animal should attend the deer-stalker may be inferred from the fact, that a stag, with his fore leg broken will often beat the fleetest greyhounds. A very singular result of the hind leg of a hart being broken is, that, in running he is almost certain to fracture the other: whether from the additional weight thrown upon it, or some other cause seems not to be known. Red deer are as cunning as foxes, and as game. In illustration of their cunning, they have been observed to keep a dog at bay till he exhausted himself with barking, and then, waiting till he had lapped his fill of water, they bolted away refreshed and rested, and soon left their pursuer behind. It should be borne in mind, that deer are powerless in the water.

The all-important agent, however, of such as have the good fortune to take their pleasure among the Scottish wilds in pursuit of the good dun-deer, is the rifle. This description of fowling-piece, if it may be so called, or more properly, sporting-piece, has, like everything in gunnery, undergone great improvement within the last twenty years. It is now frequently two-grooved; though it has been urged against this plan, that the extreme rotatory impulse given to a ball by a whole spiral turn in the grooves of the barrel, occasions a sacrifice of velocity, and consequently of range. The ball, by this mode of grooving, is made to revolve two or three times as often as, under the percussion principle, is found to be quite sufficient for projecting the plain spherical ball with

accuracy and effect. With the common sort of rifle, the best size for red-deer shooting will be found that which carries an ounce ball. The length of the barrel should be from two feet four to two feet six inches.

THE RED DEER.

The red deer (*Cervus Elephas*) is also known as the hart and the stag. The height of the British stag is somewhere about four feet; and he arrives at great weight in some localities: in the Duke of Athol's quarters it is asserted that stags have been shot which weighed upwards of thirty stone. At Woburn, we are told, they have reached thirty-four stone; while the predecessor of the present Glengarry is said to have killed one which, after the offal was removed, weighed thirty-six stone.

The stag royal is the chieftain of the wild. There was a tame one once kept at a shooting-lodge of Lord Breadalbane's, which attacked all who came near it, except the foresters, and at last was removed to the park, at Taymouth. He became so savage and expert with his antlers, that Mr. Colquhoun was informed he had killed two horses, and that no one dared to pass his haunt unless he knew them. The red deer is fond of water, to which he has recourse as well for pleasure, as for protection when pressed by hounds. "We passed, during the day," writes a highland stalker, "several forest-baths in full use—that is, moss-holes, where the stags plunge up to the neck, and roll about to cool themselves, in summer and autumn. When they come out again, black as pitch, they look like the evil genii of the mountain. In former times, poachers used to fasten spears, with the points upwards, in these places, and when the stag threw himself into the hole, he became impaled."

The full-grown harts, both male and female,

during the summer season, have back, flanks, and thighs of a yellowish brown, with a row of pale yellow spots on the sides, and a black streak along the back-bone. In the winter these parts assume a grey brown, the quarters and tail only remaining a pale buff. The head, neck, belly, and legs are of a grey brown tint, a broad brown streak passing down the forehead and nose. As the age of the animal increases, its colours become darker, and most particularly the male. This description is intended only to apply to the family of European stags: as a race, those of the British islands are distinguished by that peculiar rufous tint, which has obtained for them the title of red deer.

The stag is known from the hind by his horns, by a beard of hair under the throat, and by tusks in the upper jaw. The young of both sexes are called calves. The male, to three years old, is a brocket; at four, a staggart; at five, a warrantable stag; and afterwards, in the royal chaces, he is entitled a "hart royal." The protuberances which denote the growth of the horns, appear at about six months, in the shape of two knobs, covered with a hairy coat; in the second year the horns come forth, but, generally, straight and single. In the third year these roots put out two antlers; in the fourth, three; in the fifth, four; and before the end of the sixth, there are six or seven antlers on either side. However, this is no strict rule, the branches differ constantly in shape and number. In the Museum, at Hesse Cassel, they

shew a horn having twenty-eight antlers; while Cuvier gives instances where a horn has had sixty-two, and another sixty-three antlers. Colossal branches are frequently found also in the Irish bogs; indeed, the wilds around the famed lakes of Killarney probably contain the finest family of red deer to be met with in the British islands.

About the beginning of April the stag sheds his horns—a process which commences according to the animal's age; the young often carry their head till autumn. According to Mr. Scrope, the modern Robin Hood,—"they carry their horns as long as the hind carries her fawn, that is to say, eight months. Both horns do not necessarily fall at the same time; a day or two, or even more, occasionally intervene. Soon after the old horn has fallen off, a soft tumour begins to appear, which is quickly covered with a down-like leaden-coloured velvet. This tumour is seen every day to increase, like the graft of a tree, and, rising by degrees, shoots out the antlers on each side. The skin remains to cover it for some time, and it continues to be furnished with blood-vessels, which supply the growing horns with nourishment, and occasion the furrows observable in them, when that covering is stripped off. The impression is deeper at the bottom, where the vessels are larger, and diminishes towards the point, where they are smooth. When the horns are at their full growth they acquire strength and solidity, and the velvet covering, or skin, with its blood-vessels, dries up, and begins to

fall off; which the animal endeavours to hasten, by rubbing them against the trees: and in this manner the whole head gradually acquires its complete hardness, expansion, and beauty." The hind of the red deer goes with its young a few days over eight months.

In England, the sporting uses of this noble specimen of the deer tribe are confined to the field. The red deer is the proper quarry of the stag-hunter. For that purpose he forms as integral a portion of a stag-hunting establishment as the hounds or horses. Red deer are stabled and brought into hunting condition by means of hard meat, and the ordinary hunting-stable process. Still, stag-hunting is not the sport we would see the youth trained to, or we desired should take honours in the science of woodcraft. Stalk, young friend, the good dun deer, and ye will (and have the opportunity) but leave the chase of the calf to the cockney, and eke the household herd of Diana's disciples.

Although we have attempted to initiate the unlearned in the practical details of this first and most regal sport, as at present used, it must not be forgotten that "its age of chivalry" hath long past away. The golden era of deer-hunting, in all its branches, must be placed at that epoch of an early history, when every hill and mountain glen, every forest pass and sylvan flat, every bog and morass was tenanted by its *ferœ naturæ*. The wild deer then held state in the chase as the noblest of animals. It was far

superior in size and qualities to that of our times. We find from horns that have been dug up in several parts of Scotland, that some large species of deer must even have become extinct. Within how short or how long a space of time, it would appear difficult to determine. Portions of what are supposed to be an enormous variation of the stag, have been also discovered, at various intervals, in the mud beds and bogs of Ireland. The horns of the Irish elk are said to have measured five feet from the tips to the roots, with an expansion of near eleven feet! It is easy for the mind to picture the British Isles of the days of yore, as an aggregate of forest and moorland, thinly be-scattered by the habitations of man, while the beasts of the field out-numbered, by countless hosts, the hairs of his head. And bringing our view infinitely more within the focus of examination, we still find the stag one of the most numerous of the families of animals, and the undisputed lord of its herds. The general hunting matches of the Norman era prove the multitudes of deer ranging at will in the royal chaces; a thousand have been killed at a single match. A hunting establishment of these days was, indeed, a regal affair, encompassed with ceremonies, embarrassed with etiquettes, and attended with distinctions, more gravely important to the chieftains of those ages than we can now altogether comprehend. No doubt, also, if the red deer was then larger, the races of men were superior in size and muscular power, and more hardy than at

present. Their frames were nurtured in climacterical exposures; their lungs were unoppressed to any extent by the vitiated atmosphere of manufactories, and unconsumed by the fiery ardours of fermented liquors. The stalwart hunters and mighty men of old knew nought of artificial light. The dawn and the dusk, God's light and shadow, these were their fashionable horologes; the midday and twilight of these were their fashionable periods of refection: and thus, with breaths of morning dew and sinews of iron, they prepared to take the field, and grasp the "antlered monarch," if need were, in a hand to horn grapple. Did

> "not old custom *make* this life more sweet
> Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
> More free from peril than the envious court?
> Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
> The seasons' difference; as, the icy fang
> And churlish chiding of the winter's wind."

Already, at the Norman conquest, the red deer had been hunted to the thinning of their species, and our invaders did their utmost for its preservation and increase. They exacted heavy fines from those who trespassed on deer-enclosures, and life for life, if premeditated, was the doom awarded to the biped who slew the quadruped. Blaine gives a curious translation of a passage of Arrian's, relative to the stag-hunting of the Anglo-Saxons. It is in the form of a dialogue, and runs thus:—

"I am a hunter to one of the kings.—How do

you exercise your art?—I spread my nets, and set them in a fit place, and instruct my hounds to pursue the wild deer till they come to the nets unexpectedly, and so are entangled, and I slay them in the nets.—Cannot you hunt *without* nets?—Yes; with *swift hounds* I follow the wild deer.—What wild deer do you chiefly take?—Harts, boars, and *rein deer*, and *goats*, and sometimes hares."

THE FALLOW DEER.

The slow but certain march of civilization, notwithstanding every effort to the contrary, gradually

all but extirpated many of the noblest denizens of the forest. Boars, bears, wolves, antelopes, beavers,—these with us, at length, and at different periods, became extinct. The stag, or hart, or red deer, receded as population advanced; the circle of its retreats became narrower and narrower, until it sprung upwards to the inaccessible fortresses of the mountains; and there intrenched, it appeared to have become at once fierce, shy, and wary. This, at times, in the Scotch holds, or the wild western tracts of Ireland, would turn at bay, like the Roman in the capitol, upon its pursuers, or leaping agilely beyond their reach, roar out its challenge and defiance. This description will not appear exaggerated to those who are versed in the old border-tales of chivalry, like the late lamented Sir Walter Scott, whose "Lady of the Lake" embodies the gist of many of them in its vividly splendid and graphic portraitures of the red deer and its haunts. Still less will it be found to vary from fidelity by the enthusiastic deer-stalker who has conquered the difficulties of the sport, or who glories in them, and who finds in the stag a not less noble though a less dangerous foe than the Highlander of old. A Scot, of the time of Henry the Eighth, thus explained to that monarch the various uses besides food for which the creature served:—"We go a hunting, and after that we have slain red deer, we flay off the skin bye and bye, and setting of our barefoot on the inside thereof, for want of cunning shoemakers, we play the cobbler, compassing and measuring so

much thereof as shall reach up to our ancles, pricking the upper part thereof with holes, that the water may repass where it enters, and stretching it up with a strong thong of the same above our ancles. So, and please your Grace, we make our shoes. Therefore we using such manner of shoes, the rough hairy side outwards, in your Grace's dominions of England we be called 'Rough-footed Scots.'"

In Ireland there is still a solitary remnant of wild stag hunting, followed much after the fashion of the early days of the sport. This is pursued on the banks of the lake of Killarney with much zest. It is said that the French invasion (in 1798) of that country, placed so many arms in the hands of the western peasantry, as to occasion the extermination of the red deer of this locality. For, still keeping their weapons of offence after the danger was over, they turned them upon these noble animals. An anecdote is related of the immense power of the wild stag. The Emperor Basilius was attacked by a red deer of great size, which lifted him from his horse by merely entangling one of his horns in the sovereign's belt: although the Emperor was quickly released from his enemy by the assistance of his equerry, the bruises received in the attack proved incurable. The Normans hunted the wild stag on horseback at a time they had not universally retreated to such mountain-holds as Klibreck, Ben-Avon, Ben-Nevis, and the wild and almost inaccessible reaches of Applecross and Gairloch. Such haunts would affright the boldest rider,

and scare even Mazeppa's steed. We extract from Taylor's "Pennilesse Pilgrimage" the graphic account given of the Earl of Marr's famous hunt of the red deer in the year 1618:—"The manner of the hunting is this: five or six hundred men doe rise early in the morning, and they doe disperse themselves various ways, and seven, eight, or even ten miles compass they doe bring or chase in the deer in many heards (two, three, or four hundred in a heard) to such or such a place, as the noblemen shall appoint them; then, when the day is come, the lords and gentlemen of their companies doe ride or go to the said places, sometimes wading up to the middles through bournes and rivers; and then, they being come to the place, doe lye down on the ground till those foresaid scouts, which are called the tinckell, doe bring down the deer; but as the proverb says of a bad cook, so these tinckell-men doe lick their own fingers; for besides their bows and arrows which they carry with them, wee can hear now and then a harquebusse going off, which they doe seldom discharge in vain; then after we had stayed three houres, or thereabouts, we might perceive the deer appear on the hills round about us (their heads making a show like a wood), which being followed close by the tinckell, are chased down into the valley where wee lay; then all the valley on each side being waylaid with a hundred couple of strong Irish greyhounds, they are let loose as occasion serves upon the heard of deere, that with the dogs, gunnes, arrowes,

durks, and daggers, in the space of two houres four-score fat deere were slaine, which after were disposed, some one way and some another, twenty or thirty miles; and more than enough left for us to make merry withal at our rendezvous. Being come to our lodgings there was such baking, boyling, roasting, and stewing, as if cook ruffian had been there to have scalded the devill in his feathers—the kitchen being alwayes on the side of a banke, many kettles and pots boyling, and many spits turning and winding, with great varietye of cheere, as venison baked, sodden, roast, and stu'de; beef, mutton, goates, kid, hares, fish, salmon, pigeons, hens, capons, chickens, partridge, moorcoots, heathcocks, caperkillies, and termagents, good ale, sacke white and claret, tente (or alligant), and most potent *aqua vitæ*. All this, and more than these, we had continually in superfluous abundance, caught by faulconers, fowlers, fishers, and brought by my Lord Marr's tenants and purveyors to vitual our camp, which consisted of fourteen or fifteen hundred men and horses."

It is said that the red deer may be usefully domesticated, although with more difficulty than the other species. Martial relates of a deer that he was used to the bridle; and Montaigne alludes to the famous present made to the Emperor Maximilian, of a deer swifter than a barb, that bore both saddle and bridle! We cannot resist giving the young sportsman, in conclusion, Christopher North's portraiture of the death of the red deer, it is so

thoroughly graphic:—"Yonder, by the birches, stands a red deer, snuffing the east wind! He suspects an enemy in that airt; but death comes upon him, with stealthy foot, from the west: and if Apollo and Diana be now propitious, his antlers shall be entangled in the heather, and his hoofs beat the heavens. Flourish the rifle—a tinkle as of iron—and a hiss accompanying the explosion—and the king of the wilderness, bounding up into the air with his antlers higher than ever waved chieftain's plume, falls down stone dead where he stood; for the blue pill has gone through his vitals, and lightning itself could hardly have withered him into more instantaneous cessation of life! He is an enormous animal! What antlers! Roll him over once on his side—See! up to our breast reaches the topmost branch! He is a 'stag of ten;' his eye has lost the flash of freedom—the tongue that browsed the brushwood is bitten through by the clenched teeth—the fleetness of his feet has felt that fatal frost—the wild heart is hushed and tame!—and there the monarch of the mountains—the king of the cliffs—the grand lama of the glens—the sultan of the solitudes—the dey of the deserts—the royal ranger of the woods and forests—yea, the very prince of the air, and thane of thunder, 'shorn of all his beams,' lies motionless as a dead jackass by the way-side!—he, who at dawn had borrowed the wings of the wind to carry him across the cataracts!"

GROUSE SHOOTING

CHAPTER II.

GROUSE SHOOTING.

Come where the heather bell,
Child of the highland dell,
Breathes its coy fragrance o'er moorland and lea;
Gaily the fountain sheen
Leaps from the mountain green:
Come to our highland home, blithesome and free!

See, through the gloaming,
The young morn is coming,
Like a bridal veil round her the silver mist curled:
Deep as the ruby's rays,
Bright as the sapphire's blaze,
The banner of day in the east is unfurled.

The red grouse is scattering
Dews from his golden wing,
Gemmed with the radiance that heralds the day:
Peace in our highland vales,
Health in our mountain gales;
Who would not hie to the moorlands away?

Far from the haunts of man,
Mark the grey ptarmigan,
Seek the lone moorcock, the pride of our dells;
Birds of the wilderness,
Here is their resting-place,
'Mid the brown heath where the mountain roe dwells.

Come, then! the heather bloom
Woos with its wild perfume;
Fragrant and blithesome thy welcome shall be:
Gaily the fountain sheen
Leaps from the mountain green;
Come to our home of the moorland and lea.

THERE is no species of rural sport of which the characteristics are so picturesque and so wild as those of grouse shooting. Fox hunting and woodcock shooting both lead their disciples "remote from cities;" but though they be wild sports, the season of the year peculiar to them divests the scenes in which they are pursued of all the attributes of picturesque or beautiful. It is the golden time of the year to the young amateur of the trigger.

We are still among the hills and moors of the "land of brown heath;" for, after all, for moorfowl shooting, Scotland is the only place. In many districts of Ireland grouse abound among the wildernesses of bog with which that country is overrun; and in the northern counties of England they have been of late so carefully preserved as to afford fair sport: but "Caledonia, stern and wild," is the chosen land of the grouse shooter. Few attempt the sport in the Welch mountains, except such as happen to be to the matter born—the native Taffies — or their guests "in the season of the year." In Scotland, shooting-quarters are as commonly let to yearly tenants or on lease, as the use of the land is hired out to the farmer. We do not pretend to offer counsel to those who are about to rent a "shooting,"

further than by hinting, that, as a general principle, they use circumspection before concluding their bargains. The historian, Joe Miller, relates that a party who purchased an estate warranted to contain a hanging wood, found a gibbet in one of the fields. We imagine a good many who have taken Highland quarters on the assurance that they would furnish red game, discovered that the supply was chiefly confined to the carroty gillies that go with the ground in capacity of markers—*lucus a non lucendo.*

Grouse shooting, according to act of parliament, commences in Scotland on the 12th, and in Ireland on the 20th of August. Of course there are seasons in which the packs are more mature in June than in others in October; but that has nothing to do with the matter: we are speaking of an act of parliament, which, of course, has nothing to do with reason or common sense. Those who take time by the forelock, and begin at the commencement of the season, have light work of it—like all who have to deal with novices—particularly of the feathered family. We will imagine our beginner, in both senses of the word, has reached his quarters in good time as becomes a sportsman. I do not mean by *good* time the peep of morning, — eight or nine o'clock is quite early enough; give the birds time to eat their breakfasts, or they are off before you get within visiting distance. In contradistinction to the maxim, "the early bird gets the first worm," it is notorious that he who uncouples his dogs among the

heather at nine, fills his bag more surely and satisfactorily than he who goes to work when the stars are up. When grouse have done feeding they lie better, and afford more double shots; to say nothing of scattering the packs conveniently for the evening sport. Besides, let him be assured that walking a highland moor for twelve hours is by no means exercise to be sneered at.

The grouse shooter should begin at the lowest point down wind, thereby giving his dogs the advantage of drawing up. His object also must be to drive the birds towards some central portion of his beat. He will be attended by two or three sharp fellows, for the purpose of marking down the packs he flushes, as well as turning them *into* his quarters. If he has a companion, one of the two should make a wide circle so as to head and stop them, for they will often run half a mile or more after they are set. When a pack is on the wing, and appears to have flown beyond the reach of sight, keep the eye forward in the direction they have taken, and you may observe them when they flap their wings previous to alighting. The colour of the plumage being so like that of the heather, is the reason you cannot distinguish them when skimming just above it in rapid flight.

Should your beat range along a mountain side, the birds will be less likely to leave the ground. When flushed or put up, they will, most probably, fly along the hill side; and, after a turn or two taken when out of your sight, they will alight, though at

some distance, upon the slope or declivity. The nature of the ground and the wind must furnish hints as to their probable position; but if you mark the direction of their flight, when preparing to settle, it will help you to a shrewd guess. Early in the year, and before they have been much shot, they will be found always loathe to leave the places where they are met with. As a rule, it may be observed, that all game, when raised, are apt to settle on lower ground. Moreover, when they begin to move on the feed, they are more easily winded than when at rest, and, of course, more easily brought to a point; for which reason, towards evening the best sport may be looked for.

Whatever may be your ignorance or experience of the district you are shooting over, the best plan will always be to consult the shepherds and keepers as to where the packs are most plentiful, and arrange your mode of operation accordingly. When hatching time has been wet, the best broods will be found high up the hills; when very dry or sultry, in the flats and hollows between them. But even this will depend upon the peculiarities of the districts; for instance, if there be rills, or any supply of water high up the hills, or even on their sides, there will the grouse be met with. People accustomed to the neighbourhood can help you to these particulars, to a certainty; very likely to more important information, the resort of the game you are seeking.

When you have gone forth, and are on the ground you purpose beating, avoid such spots as are bare of

cover, and where the heath has been burnt; but where patches of old and young heather lie scattered around, together with mossy rivulets and peat-pools filled with water, look out for a point. In the middle of the day, particularly when the weather is sultry, grouse lie without moving, and are, consequently, very difficult to find. Storms or high winds make them very wild; the best way to approach them then is from below; they cannot see you so plainly as when descending from ground above them. In rain it is next to impossible to fall in with them, beside it being very questionable fun to range up to the loins in a sort of vegetable ocean; they wont "road" an inch, having, like yourself, no taste for wandering in bowers as moist as the coral gardens of the Nereides, and take wing before you are within bomb practice range.

You must not beat over the same line too often; if constrained ever so much for want of room, not more than twice a week. When disturbed, or broken, grouse do not pack together again sometimes for a day or two. These birds are said, by some writers, to change their lying according to the state of the weather. This is not true as regard localities, but only in reference to haunts. As shelter from strong sunshine, tempest, or rain, they resort to the lee of a hill, or betake them to strong heather, but only where such come within scope of their ordinary flight. Neither do they wander far to feed. They will merely make to the nearest patch of young heather, the fresh tops of which constitute their food,

for the most part, all the year round. In frost and snow they are occasionally found among the "stooks" of oats, which, there, often lie out till Christmas.

You are not to count on this wild mountain sport, young shooter, as an achievement to be compassed without earnest exertion; what then?—

> "Though sluggards deem it but a foolish chase,
> And marvel men should quit their easy chair,
> The toilsome way, and long, long league to trace—
> Oh! there is sweetness in the mountain air,
> And life, which bloated ease can never hope to share!"

As Byron says "never mind the pain," your delight will "physic it;" which, according to Shakspere, means, will "*cure* it:" wherefore we take it "doctoring" was a very different affair a couple of centuries ago from what it is now. Let your care be for your dog and your gun. If you will take our counsel, your dogs shall be pointers; and use all zeal, and the experience of older heads than your own, in their selection. Have a horror of near rangers; they are the very worst of all for moor-shooting. Of these — that is, pointers — hunt a brace at a time, it will be quite enough. Before buying your dogs see that they have round, hard feet, and are well "hung" upon their legs, to borrow an expression from the coach-maker's vocabulary. Above all, look to the head—"the knowledge-box," as it is vulgarly, but most aptly, called. It ought to be broad between the ears, which should hang down close, with a fall or dent under the eyes;

the nose long and not broad; the nostrils very soft and moist. You will, of course, ascertain that they are of a pure breed; with such you can hardly fail to obtain great excellence, by never allowing a fault to go unnoticed; by not chastising them so severely as to break their courage; and by killing plenty of game over them; which, indeed, will equally serve to give spirit to your own exploits. Never permit a dog to run in when a bird falls. The best remedy for this mischievous vice is the collar, called "trash collar," and spike. If you have patience enough, in the first instance let him run in and tear his bird to pieces, while you load; this may make him ashamed of himself. Then walk up quietly, and without noticing the remnants of the grouse, take him by the ear back to the spot whence you fired, shaking him earnestly, crying "down." Then take your whip, and lay it over him well, calling out between every stripe, "down, down." Continue this for some time, and when you have done beating, force him to remain down for several minutes. Then, speaking slowly to him, lead him to where the dead bird lies, and lift it before his nose. By following this system upon every occasion of a dog running in—unless he be good for nothing—you will cure him of running at shot. Remember, always making a dog fall down when birds rise, is the *only* way to ensure his steadiness in the field.

Christopher North says somewhere, that "shooting grouse after red deer, is for a while, at least, felt to be like writing an anagram in a lady's album, after

having given the finishing touch to a tragedy or an epic poem. 'T is like taking to catching shrimps in the sand with one's toes, on one's return from Davis's Straits in a whaler that arrived at Peterhead with sixteen fish, each calculated at ten tuns of oil." Elsewhere he says, "We do not admire that shooting-ground which resembles a poultry-yard. Grouse and barn-door fowls are constructed on opposite principles; the former being wild, the latter tame creatures, when in their respective perfection. Of all dull pastimes, the dullest seems to us sporting in a preserve; and we believe that we show that feeling with the Grand Signior. The sign of a lonely inn in the Highlands ought not to be the Hen and Chickens. Some shooters, we know, sick of common sport, love slaughter. From sunrise to sunset of the first day of the moors they must bag their hundred brace. That can only be done where pouts prevail, and cheepers keep chiding; and where you have half a dozen attendants to head your double barrels sans intermission, for a round dozen of hours spent in a perpetual fire. Commend us to a plentiful sprinkling of game; to ground which seems occasionally barren, and which it needs a fine instructed eye to traverse scientifically, and thereof to detect the latent riches. Fear and hope are the deities of the moors, else would they lose their witchcraft. A gentleman ought not to shoot like a gamekeeper, any more than at billiards to play like a marker; nor with four in hand ought he to tool his prads like the Portsmouth

dragsman — shoot in a style equidistant from that of the gamekeeper on the one hand, and the bagman on the other: neither killing nor missing every bird; but, true to the spirit of the Aristotelian doctrine, leaning with a decided inclination towards the first rather than the second predicament. If we shoot too well one day, we are pretty sure to shoot as ill another; in short, we shoot like gentlemen, scholars, poets, philosophers, as we are; and, looking at us, you have a sight

> 'Of him who walks in glory and in joy,
> Following his "dog" upon the mountain side;'

a man evidently not shooting for a wager, and performing a match from the mean motives of avarice or ambition; but blazing away 'at his own sweet will,' and, without seeming to know it, making a great noise in the world. Look with thine eyes on yonder bank—yonder sunny bank, beneath the shades of that fantastic cliff's superincumbent shadow—seest thou not basking there a miraculous amount of feathers? They have packed, Hamish—they have packed, early as it is yet in the season; and the question is, *What shall we do?* We have it. Take up a position, Hamish, about a hundred yards in the rear; on yonder knoll, with the colonel's sweeper. Fire from the rest; mind, from the rest, right into the centre of that bed of plumage, and we shall be ready with Brown Bess and her sister to pour in our quartette upon the remains as they rise, so that not escape

shall one single feather. Let our covering 'to the present' be your signal. Bang! Whew! What a flutter! Now take that, and that, and that, and that! Ha, Hamish, as at the springing of a mine, the whole company has perished! Collect the dead. Twenty-one! Life is short, and by this compendious style we take Time by the forelock!"

RED GROUSE.

The Red Grouse (*Tetrao Scoticus* of Linnæus), or moor-fowl, is well entitled to head the catalogue of British game birds, inasmuch as it is peculiar to these islands, never having been found elsewhere. It belongs to the ptarmigan family, in common with the varieties of its species, under the heads of the capercalzie and the black cock, as well as the partridge and quail, also individuals of the class *Tetraonidæ*. It

is still plentiful in England, Scotland, and in Ireland. It is found in the northern counties of England, and in most of the Scottish islands, as well as the continent of that kingdom. It was formerly abundantly spread over the more southerly districts of North Britain; but the sportsman of modern days must now intrench himself in the Highlands, whither cultivation has not yet extended: and in the most remote parts of these, such as the Cairngorm range, Sutherland, and the highlands of Rosse, he will still find the red grouse nearly unchanged in habits and disposition. There he is still the continuous inhabitant of the moor; still, as it were, the indigenous creation of the land of rock and heather, of lake and glen. There, at dawn, shall he be tracked by his loud shrill call; and there, at set of sun, shall his note enliven the picturesque solitude. In summer, it is true, the curlew's whistle, and the mournful cry of the golden plover, may vary the monotony of the grouse's call; but in winter he shall seem, with the red deer, the only animate thing for miles around. Here it is not fearful, as in the cultivated districts; nor, until warned by the gun, will it become wild and wary, but permit the approach of man unremarked but by the peculiar note which is probably one of warning to his family. When cultivation advances into the moors, either wholly or in part, its ordinary effect is observed in the retiring of the game, in thinning their numbers, and in an alteration of the habits of the birds and their choice of food. In the

midst of the wildest districts may now be found detached spots of culture. Here the grouse, instead of feeding on the odorous heath-tops, and other aromatic mountain-plants picked from beneath the snow, will migrate for their winter's food to these grounds and enclosures; where, before the grain is cleared off, they will rob the crops of the husbandman, and obtain a liberal supply. Where the grain, in the midst of December snows, still lags out, the *stooks* invariably might be seen crowded with grouse. In the lower lands they arrive as gleaners, and hunt for that which has been scattered and left in the stubble, or even in the ploughed fields. The birds that feed thus on grain are esteemed by no means of so delectable a flavour as those that pasture on the delicate young heather. Not a tenth of the number of birds formerly seen are now observed, save, as we have said, in the remoter wastes and solitudes; and the shyness and wariness of those that remain, render them difficult, nay, well nigh impossible of approach. Their plumage mingles with the dark brown moss and heath in such unbroken uniformity, as to deceive the eye of the most practised sportsman: the pointer is his best friend and assistant in the discovery of grouse which have been at all disturbed by the sportsman, however superior and more attractive may be the dash of the setter among the blue heath in the early part of the season.

The red grouse pairs very early in the year, even, in a mild month, in January. The female begins to

lay her eggs at the close of March, depositing them in hollow cavities at the base of heathery tufts, which serve both for a sort of concealment, and for protection from the weather. She floors the nest with a straw or two, or a few blades of grass. Here both parents watch over their brood, and pertinaciously defend it from the attacks of every assailant; in many known cases successfully protecting their eggs from the bold attacks of the carrion crow. The greatest foe of the young of the red grouse, as it is at present found, is the tape-worm; by which, in occasional seasons, it is so terribly ravaged, that it becomes nearly extirpated in districts so infested. After this, their most pestilent natural enemy may be deemed in importance the common crow, who vigorously attacks the ground-nests in order to carry off the eggs. The early plumage of the young bird takes its hues from the female, which is of a pale ground tint, marked with white bars, only there is more red in the feathers of the young. Its adult plumage is a rich reddish brown (sienna brown), deepening in shade on the belly to black, with pale tips, and barred across with deep brown. There is variety, however, discovered in the markings; for some of the early birds are considerably marked with white underneath. Some deem this, we believe erroneously, a sign of age. The female is altogether of fainter hues, and the palest colours are the largest. The feathers of both birds change at breeding time, becoming more decided in colour, with pale yellowish

white tips, and interlined with yellow. Also, the bare skin above the eyes, which is a prevalent feature of the family of the *Tetraonidæ*, increases in size and depth of colour. It is supposed that diversity of pasture produces diversity of plumage in the red grouse. Sir William Jardine had a grouse, shot on the moors of Galloway, whose ground colour was yellowish white, and whose dark markings were reddish brown, much lighter than the ordinary hue, while the quills were dirty white. Mr. Selby speaks of a cream-coloured or pale grey variety on the Blanchland moors of Durham, that seems to have bred and continued the diversity from year to year. The red grouse is a bird easily tamed; we have known them familiar with man. They even lay when in confinement. Jardine mentions a brood hatched under a kitchen-dresser; and many have been bred in aviaries. The young thus hatched are seldom reared to maturity; a failure no doubt produced by the need of some food not known, or unattainable in their domesticated condition.

Lagopus. Generic characters: bill very short, clothed at the base with feathers, which conceal the nostrils; wings short, somewhat rounded, with the third and fourth quills longest; tail short, and nearly square at extremity; tarsi and toes covered with hair-like feathers, sometimes over the claws, which are long, straight, and rather flattened. Types: *L. Scoticus*, &c., Europe; north parts of North America; Arctic circle.

Note. Monogamous; gregarious in winter; habits entirely terrestrial.

CHAPTER III.

CAPERCALZIE SHOOTING.

This right royal gunnery, though for the present extinct among us, holds out promise of being restored at no very distant time. The vast forests of fir which begin to clothe the Scottish mountains offer home and fitting food for this king of game birds; and the efforts recently made by their proprietors to renew the race, by importations from the north of Europe, can hardly fail of final success. Mr. Lloyd, the Swedish traveller, was influenced by Mr. Fowell Buxton, the wealthy London brewer, to procure a supply, which he did to the amount of twenty-nine. These Mr. Buxton presented to the Marquis of Breadalbane. The history of this attempt to restore the cock of the wood to the game of the British islands is given in some letters, addressed by a son of Mr. Fowell Buxton to Mr. Blaine, and published in that gentleman's admirable work, "An Encyclopædia of Rural Sports."

After detailing the reasons which induced his father to send a commission to Mr. Lloyd to procure

for him a cargo of Capercalzie—a proposal made by him to Lord Breadalbane to attempt the restoration of that bird upon the occasion of his shooting with that nobleman over his moors—he proceeds to state, that the number above named reached England in 1837, in charge of his father's Irish gamekeeper. A portion of these birds were turned out in the autumn of that year, and the remainder kept in a house. In 1838, he tells us, a brace only was reared by the keeper, but two fine broods were seen in the woods. In the summer of 1838, sixteen hens were forwarded to Taymouth; so that in all thirteen cock capercalzies and twenty-nine hens reached Lord Breadalbane, the others being destroyed by the casualties of travel. In the spring of 1839, instead of attempting to rear any capercalzies, Mr. Guthrie (Lord Breadalbane's head keeper) placed eggs, laid by the birds kept in the house, in the nests of grey-hens, who hatched and brought them up in a wild state.

According to this keeper's account, the experiment was very successful. In 1839, he states that forty-nine young capercalzies were born in the district under his care; but unfortunately they could hardly be said to have been brought up, as the poachers were soon upon them, and they made their appearance in the shops of the Edinburgh poulterers:—"A hen has been offered this season to a poulterer in Princes Street." Now, we would ask—apropos of the existing dilemma of the game legislators—why was not the offerer transferred to the care of a police-

officer? If a giraffe had been submitted to his acceptance, we presume he would have asked the seller where he procured his merchandise; and a capercalzie was at the time as little likely to have come honestly into the hands of a Highland gillie as a cameleopard. But then the cock of the wood was only game, and game stood and stands in the conventional category of no man's chattels; the fact that very probably the papa and mamma of the capercalzie aforesaid stood Mr. Fowell Buxton in as much as a pair of his dray-horses, to the contrary notwithstanding.

We know but little of the fair sporting after the capercalzie. Mr. Grieff affords us a melancholy account of its slaughter in his country, Sweden. There, he informs us, it is shot in the night-time, by torch-light. This plan, which he states it as his opinion is very destructive, and we should think on good grounds, is, he believes, principally confined to the southern provinces, and thus effected :—

"Towards nightfall, people watch the last flight of the capercalzie before they go to roost. The direction they have taken into the forest is then carefully marked by means of a prostrate tree, or by one which is felled for the purpose. After dark, two men start in pursuit of the birds; one of them is provided with a gun, the other with a long pole, to either end of which a flambeau is attached. The man with the flambeau now goes in advance, the other remaining at the prostrate tree to keep it and

the two lights in an exact line with each other; by this curious contrivance they cannot well go astray in the forest. Thus they proceed, occasionally halting, and taking a fresh mark, until they come near to the spot where they have reason to suppose the birds are roosting. They now carefully examine the trees, and when they discover the objects of their pursuit, which are said to remain stupidly gazing at the fire blazing beneath, they shoot them at their leisure. Should there be capercalzies in the same tree, however, it is always necessary to shoot those on the lower branches in the first instance: for, unless one of these birds falls on its companions, it is said the rest will never move; and, in consequence, the whole of them may be readily killed."

Now this we are constrained to pronounce poaching—even to the reproach of innermost Cockaigne. Hear how Mr. Brehm, another Swede, used to go about his sport: "I usually shot the capercalzie," he says, "in company with my Lapland dog, Brunette, a cocker. She commonly flushed them from the ground, where, for the purpose of feeding on berries, &c., they are much during the autumn months. In this case, if they only saw the dog, their flight in general was short, and they soon perched in the trees. Now as Brunette has the eye of an eagle" (*brunettes* mostly have) "and the foot of an antelope, she was not long in following them. Sometimes, however, these birds were in the pines in the first instance; but as my dog was possessed

of an extraordinary fine sense of smelling, she would often wind or, in other words, scent them for a very long distance. When she found the capercalzie, she would station herself under the tree where the bird was sitting, and by keeping up a constant barking, direct my steps towards the spot." Should our young friends ever have occasion to shoot this bird, we trust they will adopt the plan of Mr. Brehm, in preference to that of Mr. Grieff.

THE CAPERCALZIE.

The Wood Grouse, or Capercalzie (*Tetrao Urogallus*), known to British naturalists as Cock of the

Wood. The capercalzie is the largest and strongest of the birds of this section (*Tetraonidæ*) of the *Rasores*. It is also the most beautiful in plumage. We speak in the present tense, although the original capercalzie of the British Islands must be deemed to have been for many years utterly extinct; those at the present day, found or reared in our country, being, in the first case, importations from Sweden, and various parts of northern Europe. The powerful hooked bill of the male bird resembles that of a bird of prey; it is yellowish white, deeper in hue at the end. The head and neck are dark grey, approaching towards black. The feathers of the body are darkest in their centres, and closely interspersed with minute black dots; they are of lance-like form. Those below the chin are longer and raised at will; quite black, but bordered with a beautiful glossy fringe of purple and green hues. Below the eyes are patches of white. The top of the back is of a splendid orange-brown, freckled in undulating lines of brown-black. The wings are the same, the quills of a reddish umber-brown. The lowest parts of back and rump are grounded in a sort of brown-grey colour, handsomely watered with bars of black; the effect at a distance giving a blackish-grey colour. The upper tail feathers connect together at the centre; they are well nigh black, shot with a brownish grey, white-tipped: the tail itself black, and brokenly marked with white about two inches from its point, forming a broad and wavy line, or bar, across it.

The belly is black, with white spots at the centre; the breast feathers of the glossiest bright green-black, interwoven so closely and finely, as to present a breastwork to the enemy, that would turn ordinary shot from its well guarded surface. The side and flank feathers are of a ground-colour, freckled with black. The tarsi are plumed, the feathers of brownish-grey hue, long behind, of loose texture like the moor-fowls, twice the length of the hind-toes which they hide. A fine sample of this beautiful bird might measure from two feet ten inches to three feet, at its full extent. The female is found greatly inferior in size. Different specimens brought under our notice have varied, however, in length. Jardine speaks of one about three and twenty inches long, which sat but seventeen inches high; while a cock in the same cargo would have sat upon his perch on a branch of a tree full two feet above it. The female is marked similarly to the grey hen, only its hues are more distinct. It is of an ochreous brown, broadly and clearly barred with black, while the extremities decline into paler tints. The breast is a rich brownish orange colour, here and there freckled over where the black bars intervene. The bill is of a dirtier hue than in the male bird; a dark horn colour, growing paler at the tip. The females, we have ourselves seen, have all been smaller than the specimen spoken of by Jardine.

In days of yore the ancient forests of Scotland, and the sister kingdom, were abundantly supplied

with this magnificent bird, whose noble size and beauty rendered it the favourite quarry of the sportsman. Its extirpation in Ireland dates from an early period. Smith alludes to this bird in his History of Ireland, completed in 1749, as extinct since the demolition of the Irish woods. The last capercalzie, recorded as killed in Scotland, met his death in the vicinity of Inverness, more than sixty years back. Thus the destruction in the Highlands was infinitely more gradual in its character. By the exertions of many noblemen and gentlemen, principally of North Britain, the capercalzie bids fair to become once more the denizen and adornment of our woods. Lord Fife made strenuous efforts towards its naturalization. These were at first unsuccessful. The earliest importation from Sweden took place in 1828; but the male bird died. The following year affairs were better managed. In 1838-9, Lord Breadalbane made some attempts that were at once successful, for from forty-nine couples that he received, of which he turned out a portion, and kept the remainder in confinement, seventy-nine young birds, in 1839, were accounted to be hatched. Birds have been reared in confinement at Mr. Fowell Buxton's estate in Norfolk. The Duchess of Athol had some of these birds, and some birds have been hatched in the aviary at Knowsley. Mr. Colquhoun mentions an interesting fact relative to these birds. He says the young capercalzie thrive better under the foster care of the grey hen, than if left to maternal

protection. When a capercalzie's eggs are discovered, they are divided among several grey hens, whose nests the keepers search out for this purpose. The grey hens, however, will not sit upon them, unless some of their own eggs are also left; but when the young are hatched they will pay equal regard to both; and it is not until the capercalzie are fully grown that they drive away their step-mothers, who then dread them as much as hawks. We can imagine how splendidly furnished once appeared the primeval woods and moors of Ireland and Scotland, when the capercalzie perched and roosted in numbers on the trees, enriching, with its gay investiture of plumage, the solitary scenery with a beauty of its own—when the black cock and red grouse were as plentiful as sparrows—and ptarmigan and moor-fowl hovered over lake, or surmounted pinnacles of rocks, like the sylph spirits of the lorn localities. That such shall ever be the case again can never be expected, nor should it be desired. The disappearance of the large tribes of wild beasts and birds marks ever the paths of civilisation; and in bartering the picturesque for the partially beneficial, the social condition of mankind has infinitely the best of the exchange. It is very rarely that the romance and the reality of life are found living together on good terms.

The food of the capercalzie consists principally of the young shoots of fir (of which their flesh is said to taste), and of the buds and berries of the forests

and brushwood they inhabit. The call of this bird is similar to that of the black cock; and its habits, in almost every respect, strictly analagous. Jardine says, it attracts the female by its call from some eminence or open spot; and, after the season of pairing is past, it retires to undergo the process of moulting, leaving the hen to perform the duties of incubation, and to watch over her brood till the males begin to change their plumage. Generic characters: bill short, very strong, and hooked at base; nostrils vasal, lateral, and hidden by closely-set feathers; naked skin above the eyes, enlarging in spring, and brightening in hue; wings short, concave, quills elongated; tail ample and expanding, rounded at base; naked feet, edges of toes fringed; tarsi, long feathered. Types: *Tetrao Urogallus obscurus*. Europe, Northern Asia, North America.

CHAPTER IV.

BLACK COCK SHOOTING.

THERE is no bird of game so easily come at, early in the season (August), as the black grouse, familiarly known as the black cock; nor one so difficult of approach when the winter has set in. Black game do not pair like the red grouse, so shooting the hen and her young ones, before experience makes the latter sage, is as easy as circumventing a flock of turkeys. But getting a "crack" at an old cock, at any period of the year, is another affair altogether. He is found generally alone, sometimes with half a score of other "old cocks," all on the *qui vive*. Unlike the practice in reference to hen pheasants, as we shall see presently, it is fashionable to destroy the matrons of the black grouse family, for it is a pugnacious race. They cannot live with their red brethren upon decent terms, any more than white men can with their brothers of similar hue. The difference, however, is, that while the bipes *inplumis rubicundus*, or red man of the traveller, goes to the wall, the feathered animal of two legs and plumage

of "rich rouge brown" of the naturalist, is carefully fostered and "preserved."

That there is a difficulty in associating these relations—as indeed the case is with relatives generally—we are assured by many trustworthy authorities. Mr. Colquhoun observes—"that many gentlemen are now beginning to shoot the hens, observing the great increase of black game, and decrease of grouse in some districts. This," according to Mr. C. (as the dreadful old women say, who mutilate proper names under the most aggravated circumstances), "may be in part attributed to the advance of cultivation," he is speaking of Scotland; "but I cannot help thinking the black game have a good share in driving off the grouse, as I know of one instance where the latter were killed off, and the former again returned to their old haunts." In like manner, not to write it profanely, if the family of Yankee Doodle was "killed off," there is little doubt that the red gentlemen would return to their old haunts, and the Ojibbeway be great in the Broadway.

The young sportsman—our especial concern—is about to engage against black game (not the nigger of the vulgar tongue, but the *tetrao* of ornithology), and is, consequently, fain to learn how the campaign should be entered upon: let him attend. Our son, make thyself acquainted with the haunts of the quarry. Having discovered these, rely upon it they will be found hard by some clump of rushes on the fair free moor. When you get a point near cover of

that description, and especially if your dogs "road," be sure the *tetrao* is not afar off. The old hen is the first to rise—down with her. The juveniles will lie like the eggs they were in before they were hatched; they are "the spooniest brutes in nature all to sticks," not to except nothing.

This, as we have already premised, is in autumn; pass the morrow of All Souls and they change their characters wholly. Then to walk them up to your gun, and bring them down to it, is just the sort of accomplishment not to be acquired. Then they feed around the sheaves, in societies of two or three scores, with sentinels ever on the alert. The best mode of out-generalling them is, before their feeding time to ensconse yourself in a sheaf, near the spot they resort, and there wait their coming. Or place yourself behind the wall, with which the Highland field is sure to be fenced, and by poking a stone out of it you have a glorious embrasure. But this must be within range of their feeding quarters, for they are so exquisitely acute of hearing and sight, that a move, however slight, betrays you.

Where there are but very few corn-fields (by no means an unusual neighbourhood in the Scottish moorlands), the plantations on the sides of the hills may be beaten with good prospect of black cocks. When these plantings consist of birch and alder your chance will be greatly improved. Place yourself above, and send some one with a steady dog beneath them; keep in advance of these as they beat. Let the

beater keep outside, and beat the bushes, making a great outcry. You will find a single beater of more practical use than a dozen: in cover shooting of any kind, unless where several guns are at work, more mischief than good comes of a crowd of beaters. One follower, and one old staunch dog, is all you want. When you get a point, cause the bush to be well struck at the side opposite to you. By adopting this plan you will kill more game than those who put up ten times as much.

Like everything that flies the air, or walks the earth, or swims the deep, or crawls the mud, black game is obnoxious to the poacher's arts. Touching on them, Mr. Colquhoun remarks, "I may put gentlemen on their guard against two ways of poaching grouse and black game, I believe not generally known:—the first is, hunting the young packs, before the moors are open, with a very active terrier, or 'colley.' If the dog understands the business, he will chop a great many in a day. On a moor, in Roxburgshire, I saw a sheep dog, accompanied by a young farmer, performing to admiration. I had the curiosity to watch their proceedings, until I saw the dog snap up a young grouse, quick as thought. The other plan is, to set traps on the peat stacks, or in the green springs where the birds come to drink and to eat small insects; this last may be continued all the season." Now, like St. Augustine's famous confessions, the publication of these choice recipes for poaching, seems of very questionable policy. Peter Pindar's ostler

never heard of such a thing as greasing a horse's teeth, to cause him leave his corn in the manger, until the question was put by his confessor. Of all human institutions, the system of game preserving in this country, is that which is the most opposed to common sense, and the natural instinct of prudence. Landed proprietors select their keepers ordinarily from those men who have been the most notorious poachers of their neighbourhoods; yet they never go to Newgate for their stewards—how is this?

THE BLACK GROUSE.

The Black Grouse, or Black Cock.—This noble bird inhabits both England and Scotland, although sparingly spread over the former. It is found on the

borders of the two kingdoms, is plentiful farther north, and abundant in those frequent haunts of its favour—the sub-alpine sheep countries. It is found in most of the wild districts extending to Sutherland; also in the islands of Mull and Skye. The counties of England in which it is known, are Hampshire in the New Forest, Somersetshire, Dartmoor and Exmoor, in Devonshire, and the wilder portions of Staffordshire and Lancashire. They are also becoming plentiful, it is said, in the forest of Delamere, in Cheshire.

The upper part of the plumage of the adult bird is of a rich steel blue; of the lower parts pitch black; the wing coverts are also pitch black; with the secondaries, the greater ones are fringed with white, thus forming a stripe across the wings visible in flight; the under tail coverts are white. After the moulting process, there is a tinge of brown interspersed with the full plumage, which again changes at the close of winter. The peculiar feature in the construction of the black grouse, is the singular form of its tail: the feathers of which curve outwardly, and spread at its fullest development into the shape of a lyre. These plumes, thus elongated, would seem to signify some peculiar sustenance of flight; but the fact does not prove so, for their ascent is neither of long duration, nor applicable to any known habit of the species. We are told, that it holds analogy, in this forked tail and silken plumage, to the Drongo Shrikes of Africa and India. The female is smaller than the male,

although the form of its tail is much the same, save that the curve scarcely exceeds half an inch in depth. Its plumage is pale brownish-orange as the ground colour; yellow-white at the throat, breast, and belly; there is a shot of dark purple on the sides of the neck. Bars, and undulations of black, cover the plumage. The centres of the feathers on the wings and shoulders are black, diverging to a fainter hue; and at the tips, similar to those of the partridge. The bill of both male and female is black, or nearly so. There is little variety of plumage in this species, although Jardine speaks of a grey hen that he had, shot by Sir Sidney Beckwith, whose entire colour was a dull whitish grey, and whose cross markings were of a darker shade.

The black grouse are partial to moist flats, and meadows of rank and luxuriant herbage. They appear to care little for heathy pastures, but choose, in preference, those glens and passes between high lands, where grow the natural brushwood of the stunt birch and hazel, the willow or the alder, and where fern is both deep and thick. In such favoured spots they are never at a loss for food; are protected from the night-cold, and from the fervid rays of the midsummer sun. Here, in flocks, they will resort to their feeding grounds; young and old frequently joining together amicably: and here they will sport or rest during the day's heat on the hill side, and pick up food morning and evening. The females are left in charge of their young; they build their nests on the

ground, near water, and the parents convey the broods, when hatched, to the low, damp, rushy hollows, where the tender seeds of the hill grasses and rushes form their abundant nourishment. Sir William Jardine's account of the black cock is so graphic, that we extract it for the amusement of our readers:—

"This bird is polygamous. In the warmer, sunny days, at the conclusion of winter, and commencement of spring, the males, after feeding, may be seen arranged on some turf-fence, rail, or sheep-fold, pluming their wings, expanding their tails, and practising, as it were, their love-call. If the weather now continues warm, the flocks soon separate, and the males select some conspicuous spots, from whence they endeavour to drive all rivals, and commence to display their arts to allure the females. The places selected at such seasons are generally elevations: the turf-enclosure of a former sheepfold, which has been disused, and is now grown over; or some of those beautiful spots of fresh and grassy pasture, which are well known to the inhabitants of a pastoral district. Here, after, perhaps, many battles have been fought and rivals vanquished, the noble, full-dressed black cock takes his stand, commencing at the first dawn of day, and, where the game is abundant, the hill on every side repeats the humming call. They strut around the spots selected, trailing their wings, inflating the throat and neck, and puffing up the plumage of these parts and the now brilliant wattle above the eyes, raising and expanding their

tails, and displaying the beautifully contrasting white under tail-covers; he is soon heard by the females, who crowd around their lord and master. This season of admiration does not continue long; the females, or grey hens, disperse, to seek proper

THE GREY HEN.

situations for depositing their eggs, while the males, losing their feeling for love and fighting, re-assemble in small parties, and seek the shelter of the brush and fern beds to complete a new moult; and are seldom seen, except early in the morning or at evening, when they exhibit a degree of timidity the very reverse of their former boldness and vigilance."

The young may be deemed full grown early in September: but, even then, in districts that have

never been disturbed, they will often suffer themselves to be mouthed by pointers without rising. We have spoken of their summer food, as the berries of Alpine plants and the seeds of rank grasses. In winter, they eat the young fir-shoots, the catkins of the hazel and the birch, and fern leaves, which so frequently disagreeably taint their flesh. Where, however, the bird frequents the low grounds, they resort to the rape and turnip-fields, and feed during frosty weather most gratefully upon the leaves. They also resort to the stubble, and glean from it, by hundreds, with great industry, a plentiful repast. They are sometimes approached while flocking for this purpose, by means of the fences, and shot at, although at this season they are most shy and wary.

This bird has been long extinct in Ireland, although Smith, in his "History of Cork," mentions it as met with in that locality (1749). It is found in most European countries: France, Germany, and even in Italy; in Russia, Siberia, Scandinavia, Norway, Lapland. It is the *Tetrao tetrix* of authors; black grouse or cock, grey hen, of British authors: *Lyrurus tetrix* of Swainson, so named from the form of its tail.

As a conclusion to these notices of the grouse family, the following extract from the letter of an American sportsman will not be out of place:—

"There is not one wild bird or beast in America, unless it be a few ducks, precisely similar to its European congeners. The woodcock is a distinct

variety (*Scolopax minor*), rarely exceeding eight, and never eleven, ounces; he is red-breasted, and is in the northern states a summer bird of passage; coming early in the spring, sometimes before the snow is off the ground; laying, rearing its young, and going off, when the winter sets in, to the rice-fields and warm wet swamps of Georgia and the Carolinas. The bird called in the eastern states the partridge, and everywhere southward and westward of New Jersey, the pheasant, is in reality a grouse—the ruffed or tipped grouse (*Tetrao umbellus*)—a feather-legged, pine-hunting, mountain-loving bird, found in every state, I believe, of the Union, in the Canadas, and even up to Labrador. There are many other grouse in North America, of which none are found in the States, except the great abundance in Long Island, New Jersey; and the *pinnated grouse*, or prairie-fowl, formerly found in north-eastern parts of Pennsylvania, though on Long Island it is now quite extinct, and nearly so in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They are still killed on Martha's Vineyard, a little island off the coast of Massachusetts, where they are now very vigorously preserved; and in Ohio, Illinois, and all the western states, they literally swarm on the prairies. The *spruce grouse*, a small and very rare kind, is found in Maine occasionally, and in a portion of New York, between the head-waters of the Hudson and Canada frontier. Four or five other species are found in Labrador and on the Rocky Mountains; but none of these,

though well known to the ornithologist, can be included in the sportsman's list of game. The partridge of Virginia is the quail of New York, commonly known as the *Perdix Virginiana*, though of late there has been a stiff controversy as to his name and genus. It is proved, I believe, beyond cavil, that he is not exactly a quail, nor a partridge either, but a sort of half-way link between them: the modern naturalists call him an *ortyx*, a very silly name, by the way, since it is only the Greek for quail, to which he is, in truth, the more nearly connected. His habits are far more like those of the quail than of the partridge, and he should be called quail in the vernacular."

SETTERS.

Having now disposed of that which, by a slight licence, may be termed the poetry of shooting, before entering upon its more household stuff, allusion comes in aptly to its intellectual agents. Although, as a principle, we have recommended the use of the pointer, in especial to the young disciple of the trigger, the first place among shooting dogs must be awarded to the Setter. In style and dash of ranging; in courage and capacity of covering ground; in beauty of form

and grace of attitude; in variety of colour and elegance of clothing; no animal of his species will at all bear comparison with him. As the respective merits of the pointer and the setter, however, have long been a mooted question among sportsmen, we have much pleasure in laying before the reader the opinion on this subject of one of the most experienced authorities in England. We speak of Mr. Lang, the well-known gunmaker of the Haymarket, to whom we are indebted for the subjoined letter on that interesting inquiry:—

"Having had considerable experience in breeding from some of the first kennels in England, Ireland, and Scotland—amongst them those of the late Duke of Gordon, Captain Ross, Mr. Osbaldeston, and other celebrated sportsmen; and having also spent many years, and much money, in the endeavour to produce a superior description of pointers and setters; an account of my progress may be useful. I begin with my opinions concerning pointers, by stating, where I consider them superior, and where inferior, to setters. Pointers are better for partridge shooting, as they are milder in disposition, more tractable, and closer rangers; the latter a property of all others the most desirable, if you want to kill birds after the first fortnight in the season. They want also less water than setters, who often suffer much in hot weather in districts where it is not to be found. True, pointers require more walking to, to beat their ground properly; but I am persuaded, that if, instead of racing through the middle of a field as though they were walking for

a wager, and thus giving their dogs no earthly chance, young sportsmen were to go slower than they generally do, they would do more justice to themselves, their dogs, and their preserves. Few pointers can stand work on the moors (where the cream of all shooting is to be had) unless they have been bred, or have been regularly worked on them. I know many gentlemen who greatly prefer them, when so bred, to setters; but Scotch pointers are not so highly bred as south-country dogs, and therefore more calculated for rough work. Many are crossed with the foxhound, which gives them speed and courage as well as hardness of foot; but the produce of the first cross is generally too high-mettled to be managed with ease, being difficult to break from running hares, or to *down* charge; and, for the most part, very hard-mouthed. You may reckon on six days out of every twelve being rainy in the Highlands; the wet, and injuries from burnt heather, &c., cause the pointer soon to become foot-sore, particularly between the toes, as he has no hair to protect his feet like the setter. High-bred pointers are also delicate in their appetites, and will not eat the Scotch meal at first. Gentlemen should have plenty of greaves sent to their shooting quarters to mix with it, as meat can seldom be had in the remote grouse countries. They should give orders that their dogs should be fed immediately on their return from the hills, and their feet carefully washed with salt and water: indeed, if gentlemen saw to those things themselves, they would find their account

in it, observing that such dogs as would not feed well were never taken out the following day. 'A stitch in time saves nine,' is a good wholesome maxim.

"I now proceed to speak of the setter. The Irish setters are very beautiful both in and out of the field; but so hot-headed, that, unless always at work, and kept under very strict discipline, they constantly spoil sport for the first hour, frequently the best in the whole day. I have shot to many, and found them all pretty much alike. I had one, the history of whose bad and good qualities would fill half a dozen pages. As long as I kept him to regular hard work, a better never entered a field: I refused forty guineas for him, and shot him a month afterwards for his bad deeds. I bred from him, out of an English setter bitch, and some of the produce turned out very good; one of them I shot to myself for eight seasons; my reasons for parting with him I will presently explain. Unless to throw more dash into my kennel, I should never be tempted again to become master of an Irish setter. Frequently, partridges are driven into gorse or low cover, in the middle of the day, which few pointers will face. I know it is not the fashion to shoot to dogs in cover; but most true sportsmen prefer shooting five brace of pheasants to setters or mute spaniels, to fifty brace to beaters. In the latter case you stand sometimes an hour together without getting a shot; and then they rise a dozen at a time, like barn-door fowls, and as many are killed in a few hours as would serve for weeks of fair shooting.

THE SETTER.

"In the season of 1839 I was asked for a week's shooting into Somersetshire, by an old friend, whose science in everything connected with sporting is first-

rate. Then, for the first time for many years, I had my dogs, English setters, beaten hollow. His breed was from pure Russian setters, crossed by an English setter dog, which some years ago made a sensation in the sporting world, from his extraordinary performances; he belonged to the late Joseph Manton, and had been sold for a hundred guineas. Although I could not but remark the excellence of my friend's dogs, yet it struck me, as I had shot over my own old favourite setter (who had himself beat many good ones, and had never before been beaten) for eight years, that his nose could not have been right, for the Russians got three points to his one. I therefore resolved to try some others against them the next season; and having heard a gentleman, well known as an excellent judge, speak of a brace of extraordinary dogs he had seen in the neighbourhood of his Yorkshire moors, with his recommendation I purchased them. I shot to them in August 1840, and their beauty and style of performance were spoken of in terms of praise by a correspondent to a sporting paper. In September I took them into Somersetshire, fully anticipating that I should give the Russians the go-by; but I was again disappointed. I found, from the wide ranging of my dogs, and the noise consequent upon their going so fast through stubbles and turnips (particularly in the middle of the day, when the sun was powerful, and there was but little scent), that they constantly put up their birds out of distance; or, if they did get a point, that the game

would rarely lie till we could get to it. The Russians, on the contrary, being much closer rangers, quartering their ground steadily—heads and tails up—and possessing perfection of nose, in extreme heat, wet, or cold, enabled us to bag double the head of game that mine did. Nor did they lose one solitary wounded bird; whereas, with my own dogs, I lost six brace the first two days' partridge shooting, most of them in standing corn.

"My old friend and patron, having met with a severe accident while hunting, determined to go to Scotland for the next three years. Seeing that my dogs were well calculated for grouse shooting, as they had been broken and shot to on the moors, and being aware of my anxiety to possess the breed of his Russians, he very kindly offered to exchange them for mine, with a promise I would preserve a brace of Russian puppies for him. Although I had refused fifty guineas for my brace, I most gladly closed with his offer. Since then I have hunted them in company with several dogs of high character, but nothing that I have yet seen could equal them. If not taken out for six months, they are perfectly steady, which is a quality rarely to be met with. Every sportsman must know, that the fewer dogs he can do his work with properly, the better; for if they are in condition, they cannot be too frequently hunted; and their tempers, style of working, &c., become more familiar to him. On this the whole comfort of shooting depends. Upon these grounds I

contend that, for all kinds of shooting therefore there is nothing equal to the Russian, or half-bred Russian setter, in nose, sagacity, and every other qualification that a dog ought to possess. It may appear an exaggeration, but it is my opinion, in which I am supported by many of the first sportsmen in England, that there is not one keeper in fifty that knows how to manage and break a dog efficiently. It is a common practice for keepers to take their dogs out for an hour or two, twice or thrice a week, morning or evening, just before the commencement of the season—what would be thought of training a horse in that way, for a race over the flat, or a steeple-chase? Hard and constant work is as necessary for a dog, that has to hunt from morning to night, and frequently for several successive days, as for a race-horse. He should be taken out two or three hours daily, in the middle of the day, to use him to the heat, for three or four weeks before the season begins; and let me observe, in conclusion, that if his master were to adopt a similar course, he would have good cause to rejoice in the precaution before the end of his first week's shooting."

Another gentleman, a large breeder of sporting dogs, thus answered our queries as to the kind of animal best suited to the general purpose of shooting:—

"I have tried all sorts, and, at last, fixed upon a well-bred setter as the most useful. I say well-bred, for not many of the dogs with feathered sterns,

which one sees now-a-days, are worthy the name of setter. Pointer fanciers object to setters on account of their requiring more water: but there are generally sufficient springs and peat-holes on the moors for them; and, even in the early part of September, a horse-pond or ditch is to be met with often enough. For cover or snipe shooting the setter is far superior, facing the thorns in the cover, and the wet in the bogs, without coming to heel shivering, like a pig in the ague. I have always found, too, that setters, when well broke, are finer tempered, and not so easily cowed as pointers. Should they get an unlucky, undeserved kick, Don, the setter, wags his tail, and forgets it much sooner than Carlo, the pointer. My shooting lying near the moors, takes in every description of country, and I always find that, after a good rough day, the setter will out-tire the pointer, though, perhaps, not start quite so flash in the morning.

"I always teach *one*, at least, of my dogs to bring his game, which saves a world of trouble, both in and out of cover, but never allow him to stir for the bird until after loading. Should any of these remarks prove of service, I shall feel most happy in having assisted a brother sportsman."

A few words on the management of shooting dogs in kennel. The building should be divided into compartments, having each a court, and communicating with each other. A brick, or rather tile, pavement is the best for the floors, as it is easier washed, and dries

sooner than the common brick. The court should be gravelled, and each water-trough never without a piece of sulphur in it. Twice or thrice give the dogs fresh straw for their beds. Put salt into their "sop," as it will prevent your dogs being plagued with worms. Remember the specific for condition in any animal is, "plenty of good food, and plenty of exercise." Draft your dogs to their meals, as it teaches a well impressed lesson of obedience. In summer wash them frequently with soft soap—the avenging angel of vermin; also, if possible, give them a swim every day in hot weather. Of all things take care ticks do not get a footing in your kennel; if they do, it 's long odds you never get rid of them. Probably the only radical cure, in such a case, is, to pull it down. After hunting in wood or cover, examine them, and let every tick be carefully picked off; this is an absolutely necessary precaution. When they are numerous, or very small, rubbing a dog well with sweet oil will kill them. Dogs should be well wiped, and thoroughly cleansed with a brush and rubber after hunting, in the manner horses are. This will keep them in a very different condition from those, that are suffered to lie down with the mud on their bodies, to cake and harden.

W. HARVEY, DEL. FRED. W. BRANSTON, SC.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.

CHAPTER V.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.

Loiterer rise! the morn hath kept
For thee her orient pearls unwept;
Haste, and take them, while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night.
See! Aurora throws her fair
Fresh-tinted colours through the air.
Come forth! come forth! 'tis very sin
And profanation to keep in!
There's joy and gladness in the skies;
Loiterer! from thy couch arise!

Our life is short, our moments run
Swift as the coursers of the sun;
And, like the vapour or the rain,
Once lost, can ne'er be traced again!
Each flow'r hath wept and eastward bow'd;
The skylark, far above the cloud,
To hymn his song of praise, is fled;
And all the birds their matins said:
There's joy and gladness in the skies;
Loiterer! from thy couch arise!

Haste, 'ere the sun hath drunk the dews,
Boon Nature to her banquet woos;
Around, the smiling fields no more
Are waving with their golden store;
Homeward bears the loaded wain,
The golden glories of the plain;
And nut-brown partridges are seen
Gliding among the stubble screen:
There 's joy and gladness in the skies;
Loiterer! from thy couch arise!

Next, in seasonable succession to moor-fowl shooting, comes the chase of the Partridge—for once to borrow a sporting term from our friends beyond the Straits of Dover. Like the red grouse, partridges may be be called an exclusively national species of game. We call them "birds," as taking precedence of the whole feathered family; and if flavour be any indication of quality (we did not say *condition*, as it might have come within the possibility of a pun), they are entitled to this pre-eminence. As we shall show presently, there are two kinds of partridges: the grey, our indigenous, if not exclusive sort; and the red-legged, a foreigner, of recent introduction (and; like other foreigners, if we had never seen him it would have been no great loss).

According to act of parliament, you are entitled to shoot them from the 1st of September to the 1st of February; but (especially on your own manors) if you begin on the 20th and finish on Old Twelfth Day, you will find your reward, both in better sport and a better stock. The amateur of the trigger and

a good crop of game, would do well to remember the old catch—

"'Twas on the morn of Valentine
The birds began to mate."

If you feel satisfied your ground will not be beaten before you reach it, nine o'clock is quite soon enough to take the field in September. At that hour the coveys, which are not in the standing corn, will be met with in the stubbles, the cover of old high grass, in the fallows and potato fields; as yet, they do not frequent turnips. When you have put up a covey, you may make sure it will settle in the standing corn. To turn your sport to the best account, have markers so placed as to ascertain where they alight. When disturbed they are not likely, at this early period of the season, to fly far; but if shot at they will drop, often close to you, and lie as if they were dead, from the effect of terror. Birds which thus drop and cower, are very difficult to find, with the best nosed dogs; your markers here will do you good service.

If not supplied with markers, after having flushed your birds, beat for them as closely as if you were looking for a needle in a barrel of hay. Indeed, it ought to be the shooter's axiom, that a bird which he *has* seen is worth a score that he *hopes* to see. Besides, nothing tends to make dogs more industrious and confiding—the latter a great point—than making them work on a spot where you are certain they will find, and where they *do* find. In such cases, too, the odds are, you kill your bird or birds, and your

four-footed friend looks in your face, as who shall say, "All's well that ends well."

Towards noon you will miss the partridge from his ordinary haunt, and meet with him beside some patch of water; and having drank, he will repair to some bank or potato ridge, for the purpose of sunning himself. At this hour betake yourself and your dogs to some place of shade and repose; for the heat is too oppressive peradventure for biped or quadruped, and the scenting is sure to be bad. About three, the birds will again begin to run, and if a breeze, too, should put itself in motion, look for sport; afternoon shooting is *ten per cent.* better than morning. If the range you beat in the morning held a good head of birds, go back to it; partridges, unless very frequently disturbed, are found more generally near home than elsewhere.

As general rules, the young partridge shooter may adopt worse than the following:—During the entire season he will find wheat-stubbles and turnips the best spots for holding partridges. Moreover, at all times of the year, they lie more on the fallows than is supposed. Therefore if turnips and stubbles fail, try the fallows; the lands which are nearest the hedgerows in particular. Late in the season, the fallows are the first places to which the partridge shooter should direct his steps. If the weather be fine and open, he is sure to find his game there. It will lie very close, and most probably afford some choice double shots. Also he should now beat furze-

covers, the fern of heaths and warrens, and cole-seed patches, and the long white grass of young plantations. This latter is very attractive, from the seeds and insects with which it abounds. In storms and fogs partridges lie very close, and in fine days which follow storms. Heavy rains cause them to lie extremely close in turnips; and, therefore, as well as for many other reasons, it is not favourable for sport. So much for the prose details of our sport: we will sum up with a touch of the poetical, from the pen of Colonel Hawker, the *Magnus Apollo* of young sportsmen: "If birds are wild, a sportsman who goes out with his man, and has no other attendant, will bring in more game, if he contrives to mount that man, or rather a light boy, behind him; because the moment the dog stands, he can then dismount (by throwing the right leg over the horse's neck), and leave the man in full possession of the Rosinante, instead of being encumbered with a led horse, which frequently precludes the possibility of his galloping on to mark a covey, or follow up a towering bird. Moreover, it requires no conjuror to discover that two horses make more noise than one; and all noise, after the first few weeks, is the ruin of sport. The gentleman with his stud, would say—'Why not have three horses?' This, I admit, is a more dignified way of taking the field, than the subaltern turn-out of the Johnny Trot behind; but then we have the clatter of three horses, with the clatter of two servants' tongues, an increase of noise that would set the birds on the run; and it

would be as vain to attempt the suppression of the one as the other. In short, I would back the double-mounted gent. against the great squire and his stud. Two on a horse, and the cad to be helmsman, is an excellent way of giving the shooter the liberty of his hands, the moment the covey springs unexpected. Recollect, too, in wood about five feet high, a mounted man can shoot, where one on his legs cannot see; and again, if a hare runs straight away, she may be killed ten yards further, if you are well above her, and catch her head and pole clear of her high rump. All these little *et cetera* are what may be called the finish; as to ordinary sporting, in the present day, we may as well tell a man how to eat his dinner." The colonel treats the position of his young scholars with somewhat of a high hand.

The common Partridge, of British authors, is abundant in Europe; and plentiful in almost all parts of our own island. It is one of the game birds that delights in the cultivation that follows the steps of man. The cunning of this bird can only be equalled by its laziness. Finding a plentiful harvest in the grain of the labourer, it will often make its nest in the young corn and grasses, and by this means perish; for before the young brood is hatched, the harvest has sometimes commenced. The partridge pairs very early in spring, although the young are frequently not more than half grown by the beginning of September. Their nests are selected variously. The wildest birds have been known to

make them close to a highway, and within a foot of a field path; while some have chosen for concealment the cavities of old oaks. However, their prevalent

THE PARTRIDGE.

mode of nidification is thus:—The first genial days of a fine February, they have paired and selected their summer abode, long before there is any need for preparation for the season of incubation. They seek out a ready-made cavity, which they scoop out into a deeper and more symmetrical hollow; and, without furnishing the nest, but contenting themselves with the bare ground, they deposit from twelve to twenty eggs. It is sometimes made in a furrow, always under cover of tufts of grass.

This bird has few means of defence; but that instinct, which leads her to singular stratagems, is very

remarkable. Let an intruder stumble on a partridge's nest, and he shall find, in the midst of a sort of scrambling uproar—the cries of the parents, and the bustle of the brood—that the mother bird will hop limping away, as though her wings were broken, or as though, maimed and wounded, she threw herself on the mercy of the enemy. Both parents are assiduous in the nurture of the young. We find in Selby's first volume of "Illustrations of British Ornithology," an instance of the vigorous defence this usually timid bird will make when pushed to extremity, and actuated by the parental instinct:—"A person engaged in a field not far from my residence, had his attention arrested by some objects on the ground, which, upon approaching, he found to be two partridges, a male and female, engaged in battle with a carrion crow: so successful and so absorbed were they in the issue of the contest, that they actually held the crow till it was seized and taken from them by the spectator of the scene. Upon search, the young birds, lately hatched, were found concealed amongst the grass. It would appear, therefore, that the crow, a mortal enemy to all kinds of young game, in attempting to carry off one of these, had been attacked by the parent birds, and with the above singular success." In similar instances, of the heroism of instinct, may be traced the affinity of all animal classes in the world's space. Even as the human parent will overcome the instinct of self-preservation by the heart's impulse, or the body's

courage, so will the bird, the dog, the elephant, at times, rise above instinct into heroism.

The plumage of the partridge is too well known to need specification beyond the statement, that at breeding seasons its colours become deeper; that, in the male at that period, the skin above the eyes becomes of a pinkish red colour; while, in the female, the feather-tips are then more distinctly marked with pale yellow grey. Its plumage is subject to greater variation than almost any bird in the list of the *Rasores;* cream-coloured markings and pure white spots often occurring, and umber-brown and pure black blotches being observed in different specimens of this game. It is not found in the moorish districts of Scotland. Generic characters: bill short, rather strong, bending from the base; nostrils lateral, uncovered by feathers, but protected by an arched naked scale; wings short, rounded, fourth and fifth quills longest; tarsi and feet naked; anterior toes united at the base by a membrane. Types: *Perdix cinerea, picta, &c.*; Europe, Asia.

Note.—Frequent lower countries, and are partial to cultivation. Not arboreal, gregarious only to the amount of their broods.

It is said that a "preponderance in the number of cock birds occurs in the breedings of each season;" in consequence of which the hen partridge is so tormented by a number of males, "that she drops one in one place and one in another, until there remains for her but one cock and no nest!" The best

mode we are told to destroy the superabundance of cocks is, during the first weeks of the season, to net the covey, and destroy all the old cocks, leaving only as many young ones as hens, or even one less; for it is certainly better that the hen should look for the cock (which she undoubtedly will find), than a number of cocks for a hen. It should be recollected that, where old birds are left, they will, at the pairing season, drive off the youngsters, and prevent their breeding; for let any sportsman declare if ever, on finding a single brace of partridges in the shooting season that have not bred, and are termed by the sportsman a gelt pair, he has found a covey near the same place where he found them; which can only be accounted for by the old birds driving the young ones from the breeding grounds. Indeed, if some of the cocks are not killed every year, the chances will be, the district will in time become destitute of game.

When the eggs are hatched, the young birds can run at once; and so immediate is this, that they have been seen with parts of the shell still sticking to them. When partridges' eggs are introduced under the common hen, she will hatch them, and rear them indiscriminately with her own. The favourite and one of the most necessary sorts of food of the young partridge, is ants' eggs; these must be procured for birds hatched under foster care. The male and female bird have a different call: the cock has a sharp and strong call; the hen partridge a low and softer one. The *jucking* noise peculiar to their

settling themselves to roost, is the most important one to the sportsman. The male bird is the chief officer, both in the nidification and rearing of the young until they can faintly fly, when he loses all the parental solicitude for which both male and female partridge are so remarkable; but the hen still watches over them, conducts them to their scratching grounds, searches their food for them, and gathers them, at the least alarm, together; and this continues until they are within a third as big as herself. Every sportsman knows the cry of distress given by this bird when flushed; and, perhaps, one of the most interesting scenes, in the world of the game fields, occurs, when both parents sitting, covering the chickens with their wings, are surprised. Off flies the male, and into the very teeth of the enemy, perhaps in order to blind him as to the situation of the nest; next the female rises, hovering low, in another direction: and the danger past, they will return, silently and by secret ways, to their beloved charge. Although the partridge may seem indifferent to its own preservation, by roosting upon the ground, where it might be exposed to the dangers of ferrets, stoats, wild cats, &c.; yet it may be seen, that it chooses its ground always in the midst of cultivation, and never trusts itself to coverts, hedges, and coppices, save in the day time.

The Red-Legged, or French, Partridge (*Perdix rufa*).—A beautiful bird, which, notwithstanding its name, prefers Southern Europe, Spain, and Portugal,

to France. In Normandy and Picardy they are so little known, that the grey partridge is in infinitely greater abundance. But preferring in all cases a

THE RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE.

warm dry soil, these birds flock pretty plentifully in the sunny vine provinces of France. They are said to like mountainous situations, covered with wood; and, also, that the partridge spoken of in the Chronicles, "The king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as one would hunt a partridge on the mountains," was the red-legged one. Their mode of perching on trees, which the grey partridge never does, and their appearance in *packs*, constitute differences from the latter. This rich-plumaged bird was introduced into England as early as the reign of Charles the Second. English landowners, during the last century, have

also imported many thousands of their eggs, and have bred them, and turned them out on their manors. It is said that there are abundance of these red birds on Lord Hertford's estate, in Suffolk. They have lately been killed in the southern and south-eastern counties. Their flesh is white, and can never be esteemed as good eating as the common bird; but they prove an adorning variety, and pleasant addition of plumage, in the parks of the game-preservers. They are in plenty in the isles of Jersey and Guernsey; and it is supposed, that some birds have made a flight, and alighted on our coasts from these islands. They do not appear ever to have been naturalized in Scotland or Ireland. They are used in Cyprus as game-cocks, here and elsewhere, for the amiable purpose of butchering each other. It swarms in the island of Nansis to such a degree, as to be a great nuisance to the people of the place, who are compelled to collect the eggs for destruction, in order to obtain a chance of saving their harvests from the little creature's rapacity. Imagine a country where a man leads thousands of partridges about like sheep; not, certainly, on the ground, but hovering over his head, and alighting around him to repose! Yet such is the account given of the partridge-land round Trebizond. In Provence, this collecting together partridge-flocks, takes place in a smaller degree. "A certain Sussex man," relates Willoughby, "had, by his industry, made a covey of partridges so tame, that he drove them before him,

upon a wager, out of that county to London, though they were absolutely free, and had their wings grown." It may be remembered how Lord Orford, in 1790, made a bet with the eccentric Marquis of Queensbury, that a drove of geese would beat an equal number of turkeys in a race from Norwich to London. The geese kept steadily jogging on, but the turkeys flew up to roost in the trees adjoining the high-road, and the drivers lost time in dislodging them; thus the geese beat the turkeys hollow. Mr Daniel gives this faithful description of the bird's plumage:—"It is larger than the grey partridge, and the bill and irides are red; the forehead is grey brown; the hind head is rufous brown; the chin and throat white, encircled with black; added to which, is a band of white over each eye to the hind head: the fore part and sides of the neck are cinereous, with two spots of black on each feather; the hind part of the neck rufous brown; the back, wings and rump, greyish brown: the breast pale ash colour; belly, sides, thighs, and vent rufous; the sides marked with lunular streaks of colour, white, black, and orange; quills grey brown, with the outer edges yellowish; the tail composed of sixteen feathers: the four middle ones grey brown, the next on each side the same, but rufous on the outside, the five outer ones rufous on both sides; the legs are red, and the male only has the blunt knob, or spur, behind them."

W. HARVEY, DEL. FRED. W. BRANSTON, SC.

PHEASANT SHOOTING.

CHAPTER VI.

PHEASANT SHOOTING.

"What can people know about sporting that never go a hunting above once a year, and then only on Easter Monday in a hackney-coach?"—Sir Oliver Ballwinkle.

"Heeds not the jay the insect's painted wings,
Nor hears the hawk when Philomela sings."—Pope.

It is a fact, that more than one writer, upon the science and mystery of sporting, speaks of the cruelty of killing the pheasant, because of the beauty of its plumage. This is carrying consideration for outward appearance, beyond most modern instances. For our poor part, we hold such philosophy worthy only those gentry who "go a hunting on Easter Monday in a hackney-coach." To the youthful shooter we say, account fine feathers as little as doth the hawk; indeed, we go further, and counsel him, should the chance offer, rather to enrich his game-bag with some especial dandy of the pheasant tribe, some beau in gold or silver plum'd brocade, than the mere bird of scarlet

and purple, that, in and out of season, form the festoons of every poultry butcher's show-window.

Pheasant-shooting commences on the 1st of October. It is rarely, however, that the season is so forward as to give us, so early, nides sufficiently advanced towards trigger maturity. Indeed, the sport may be postponed with great convenience; as no cover-shooting is pleasant, or very profitable, till the trees are at least partly stripped of their foliage. In beating covers for pheasants, if you use dogs at all, employ low-backed spaniels, with short legs. Never take your setters with them; for you cannot find a dog, any more than a man, master of all trades. They, the spaniels, ought to be slow, mute, and fond of "pottering," or hunting close around you. But the true way to go about this business is to take cover yourself, with only a single steady retriever at your heels. Some thirty or forty yards behind you have a corps of boys with sticks, to beat the bushes, and who will instantly give over when they hear a shot, until the word is again given by you—"Go on." They should then proceed as before.

As this process will certainly cause many of the old birds to run for the cover sides, the boundaries and adjoining fences should be beaten immediately after the cover has been drawn. Here you may be sure of shots, and without the annoyance of boughs and stems of trees to interrupt your aim. All hedgerows in the vicinity of covers are likely to hold

pheasants, but more especially those which run from one to another. Should you design to beat them without disturbing the covers, the best time is early in the morning, after rain, as the dripping of the trees has the effect of driving pheasants abroad In beating for pheasants, more particularly early in the season, don't leave a foot of cover untried: we have often found a whole nide in a tuft you might put under your pocket-handkerchief; and that, too, within a few yards of a spot, where a volley of jokes had been firing off for half an hour.

Some old sporting writers allude to a practice that once prevailed, of beating thick underwood for pheasants with an ancient pointer, having bells affixed to his neck; so that when the sportsman ceased to hear them, he became aware there was a point. Upon this style of shooting a modern writer observes, "When a man goes out with his pointers and bells, he ought not to forget the cap for himself." In extensive woods, pheasants rarely take very long flights; but when you flush them in the open country, they will soar up to a great height, and then skim out of sight, as if bound for another kingdom. Those who are employed to mark pheasants, will frequently see them flapping their wings to end their flight, and settle in, or rather precipitate themselves into, some thick bush or hedgerow, where they will perch just above the ground, and remain as still as if dead. In like manner, the hen pheasant, when sitting, hovers over her nest, and then

falls, as it were, perpendicularly into it. This, of course, prevents all scent of their seat.

During the winter, turnip-fields in the neighbourhood of covers, about three in the afternoon, are good places for pheasants. By beating from the cover, with a steady dog, you will get fair sporting. Your dog should quarter from your signal, and drop at wing or shot on the instant. The pheasant is the prince of the game birds of our island, to be met with in such store as to entitle him to the notice of the sportsman. It is true, the capercalzie exists among our forests, and so does the wild turkey of America in the woods of a Yorkshire preserver; but, as a species, the pheasant is the noblest of British game. Odd enough that we should derive it from China, which certainly does not furnish us with the best samples of "the human form divine."

The common Pheasant (*Phasianus Colchicus*).—Britain cannot boast, among her ornithological beauties, the indigenous possession of this bird. It has no claim, in common with any of its family, the *Phasianidæ*, to a place in European *fauna*. It is, notwithstanding, perhaps, the most successful of all our introductions. It was brought into Britain, in the reign of Edward the First, according to Echard; and into Europe from Colchis (whence it still retains its name), 1250 years before the Christian era. The pheasant is found in abundance spread over all the woods and forests of England, as well as from the south to the middle of Scotland. In Ireland, from

the impracticability of the preservation of game, it is much more unequally distributed. In our English preserves, the two European birds of different

THE PHEASANT.

plumage, the one strikingly marked in the neck with a white ring, the other without it, have bred together; and thus we constantly observe specimens of either, or with the mark modified. Of all birds this

is the most easily shot; for when they rise, they make a whizzing and flapping noise that instantly betrays them: besides that, they are heavy on the wing, and of slow flight. Thus Pope says:—

> "Ah! what avail his glossy varying dyes,
> His purpled crest, and scarlet circled eyes,
> The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
> His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold."

In the woods, the female makes her nest of dry grass and leaves, and there she lays from eighteen to twenty eggs in a season; but half that number is above the average, when semi-domesticated in the pheasantry. They will roost upon the highest trees of the forest, at night; by day, the hens will haunt by dozens the lawns and gardens attached to their preserves, and, hunting for their promiscuous food, do considerable damage to fruit and flower. When with the female, the male bird makes a flapping noise, that often betrays its retreats. A pheasant, though so marvellously beautiful, is a dull bird; and the hen, in its domesticated state, loses all the patience, vigilance, and care with which, in the remoter woods, she hatches and rears her brood: indeed, when kept thus, the common hen is frequently her substitute over the eggs. A full grown pheasant cares little what food he attacks; he is immoderately fond of oats and barley. When young, ants' eggs, wood-lice, earwigs, and other insects seem necessary to the bird. It may be brought, or rather

it has a tendency, to couple with other gallinaceous birds; with the domestic poultry, the common hen, and even the turkey. It has been known to have intercourse with the black grouse, notwithstanding some very fine hexameters of Mr. Addison to the contrary.

In our preserves, we find many varieties of plumage; the female sometimes assumes a pure white, more often than the male bird. The beautiful variety, called the Bohemian Pheasant, of the rich silvery grey, is well known. Jardine says, that the eggs of the varieties may also be known and separated by the colours of their shells, being of quite different shades. Where the pheasant is wildest, its flesh eats the best. At all epochs, the fame of the pheasant has been unrivalled, even by the peacock, for beauty. When Crœsus, king of Lydia, desirous to dazzle others, or be dazzled himself, by the voluptuous trappings of his wealth, demanded of the wise man, what could exceed his magnificence? Solon answered simply, that the plumage of the pheasant was finer than all he saw. And, indeed, the artist, the manufacturer, the dyer, the birth-night beauty, or the poet, may faintly imitate, but never reach or surpass the splendours of its vivid hues. That blending of colours, which yet do not intermingle; that shotting or shading of gem-like radiances, found in the plumage of the pheasant, is its characteristic. Beswick thus describes it:—"The pheasant is about two feet eleven inches in length. The bill is of a

pale horn colour; the nostrils are hid under an arched covering; eyes yellow, and surrounded by a space, in appearance like scarlet cloth finely spotted with black; immediately under each eye is a small patch of short feathers, of a dark spotted glossy purple; the upper parts of the head and neck are deep purple, varying to glossy green and blue; lower parts of the neck and the breast reddish chesnut, with black indented edges; the sides and lower parts of the breast the same, with pretty large tips of black to each feather, which, in different lights, vary to a glossy purple; the belly and vent are dusky; back and scapulus beautifully variegated with black and white, or cream colour, speckled with black, and mixed with deep orange; all the feathers edged with black; on the lower part of the back is a mixture of green; the quills are dusky, freckled with white; wing coverts brown, glossed with green, and edged with white; rump plain reddish brown; the two middle feathers of the tail are about twenty inches long, the shortest on each side less than five, of a reddish brown, marked with transverse lines of black; legs dusky, with a short blunt spur on each, but in some old birds the spurs are as sharp as needles; between the toes there is a sharp membrane. The female is less, and does not exhibit that variety and brilliancy of plumage which distinguish the male: the general colours are light and dark brown, mixed with black; the breast and belly finely freckled with small black spots on a light ground; the tail is short,

and barred somewhat like that of the male; the space round the eye is covered with feathers." Heliogabalus is recorded to have fed the lions of his menagerie with the delicious flesh of these birds. The Greeks, as they ascended the river Phocis, were early caught by the splendid plumage, and introduced the pheasant among the Romans, as a common article of luxury among the magnificent. Jardine says, that the pheasant "may be said to be originally restricted to the Asiatic continent, extending over to the greater part of it, and reaching to China and the confines of Tartary." It is now known in Siberia, and has been introduced into North America. The price pheasants bore in England, in the time of Edward the First, was fourpence; at the same time that a fat mallard was three halfpence, a plover one penny, a couple of woodcocks three halfpence, and a fat lamb at Christmas one shilling and fourpence. At Isola Madre, in the Lago Maggiore, they are in a beautiful prison-land; for they cannot fly over the lake to the continent, their wings are so short, and so ill-adapted for flight; they are drowned when they attempt it. The pheasants of the Archipelago, that go thither from the woods of Thessaly, are accounted the handsomest in the world, besides being the largest. The rich Turks of Salonica use to let fly at them birds of prey, which they carry on their fist. Sonnini thus describes the method:— "When the pheasant first takes its flight, the bird of prey, which they let loose, hovering above, com-

pels it to perch on some tree; he then places himself on another branch over its head, and keeps it in such terror, that it suffers itself to be approached, and easily taken alive." This fact sufficiently develops the mystery of fascination. Mr. Waterton gives us a most valuable remark on breeding pheasants: "Notwithstanding," says he, "the proximity of the pheasant to the nature of the barn-door fowl, it baffles every attempt at complete domestication, from a most singular innate timidity, which never fails to shew itself on the sudden and abrupt appearance of any object. I spent some months in trying to overcome this timorous propensity in the pheasant, but completely failed in my object." At the commencement of the season, the birds that he reared under a common hen, took to the woods: "The more we look into the habits of the pheasant, the more we are persuaded that much more attention ought to be paid to it than it receives, or than is generally paid to other kinds of game. The never-failing morning and evening notice which it gives of its place of retreat, together with its superior size, cause it to be soon detected, and easily killed. The tax, too, which government has put upon it, enhances its value as an indispensable delicacy at the tables of those who give good cheer."

CHAPTER VII.

PTARMIGAN SHOOTING.

"Trained to the chase, his eagle eye
The ptarmigan in snow could spy."—SCOTT.

BEING a member of the grouse family, in a work merely of natural history, the ptarmigan would have been entitled to a notice among its race; but, as inferior to the pheasant and partridge, as a bird of game, it must be content to follow them in these pages. Steam navigation, and the recent uncommon facilities of locomotion, have rendered us familiar with the presence of this pretty bird in the shops of the poulterers, without our knowing, or probably caring, "how the devil it got there." Indeed, the most recondite in sporting reading, would have found it difficult to expatiate on the habits, pursuit, and process of sporting after the ptarmigan, till the publication of Mr. Colquhoun's "Moor and Loch." Hawker is silent about it; Daniel spoke of it as somebody had spoken to him; and Colonel Thornton

says, he shot a batch of them on the top of some mountain near Loch Ennoch. Mr. Blaine, in his Encyclopædia, also deals with it very cavalierly. Now, there is no doubt but that it is a bird admirably in keeping with the districts in which it is found. Perched among the grey rocks, of which it seems a broken fragment, its wild look contrasts strangely with the disregard it manifests of man's presence. You cannot roam over the savage solitudes it inhabits, and look on the absence of all knowledge of civilization its demeanour denotes, without being strongly reminded of the stanza in the story of Alexander Selkirk:—

> "The beasts that roam over the plain,
> My form with indifference see;
> They are so unacquainted with man—
> Their tameness is shocking to me!"

Like deer-stalking, and a visit to Corinth, it isn't everybody who has had a turn with the white bird of the mountains. We therefore take the liberty of borrowing Mr. Colquhoun's description of a day with the ptarmigan; it is his second day:—

"When we got to the foot of Ben-Voirla, we found that there were two packs, on what is called the second top, and were thus saved the trouble of scaling the highest. So, taking two young farmers as guides, we reached the ground after a stiff climb. On ranging one side of the mountain, just as we were turning round to the other, the dogs ran into

a small pack, which jerked round an angle, and were out of sight in a moment. I knew their flight would probably be a short one, so began to look about with the utmost caution. My friend, quite a novice in the sport, had no idea of finding the game himself, and continued to hunt the dogs with great assiduity. We happened to be pretty near together when they again poked up a ptarmigan. Neither of us thought of each other, or the ordinary rules of shooting, but fired at once, and down came the bird. This was rather unsatisfactory, as the honour and glory belonged to neither: however, we determined it should not happen again. I described what places the birds were most likely to haunt, and cautioned against trusting to the dogs, which are quite unaccustomed to the ground; but finding my companion preferred his own plan, I left him, and commenced my slow and wary search. At last I caught sight of a ptarmigan upon the very ridge of the hill, about thirty yards above me. It was in a crouching attitude, and had I attempted to put it up, would have dipped out of sight in an instant. I was therefore obliged to shoot it sitting; but the moment I fired, another flew straight over my head, his hoarse croak proclaiming the cock of the pack. I had a fair shot, and down he dropped. The first I killed being a hen, they made a capital pair for my collection.

"I was now very anxious my brother sportsman should have a good chance; so, joining company, we scrutinized the ground on every side, without success:

only one bird was put up, out of all distance, which my friend determined to follow. So, agreeing to meet at the foot of the hill, we took different ranges. Fortune again declared in my favour, for just as I was scrambling, with hands and knees, up a steep precipice, a pack of four rose upon the very top, and flew into mid air, just giving me time to steady myself, cock my gun, and get a distant shot, when one of them dropped into the gulf below. I sent my guide to fetch it, which he accomplished with some difficulty; and then dispatched him in quest of my less successful companion, with the injunction, that if he joined in pursuit of my game, the odds would be three to one in his favour.

"I had scarcely got to the peak, where I thought it most probable my three fugitives would again take refuge, when I was overtaken by one of those bitter hail showers which often fall on the mountains in early autumn; so, placing my gun in its waterproof cover, and my back, Fitzjames like, against a rock, I impatiently hoped for the cessation of the storm. Scarcely had it began to abate, when an Alpine hare came courtseying past, about eighty yards from my shelter, and then seated herself with equal grace—as tempting a mark for a rifle as could possibly be placed. It was not to be resisted, even with my small shot; so, slowly uncasing my gun, and taking deadly aim, I fired. Puss gave an active bound at this unlooked-for attack, and took her leave with far less ceremony than she made her *entrée*.

"I had just re-loaded, when my guide appeared with a breathless malediction on my gun. He had seen my friend going down the mountain, but quite beyond recall, and, when returning to me, had stumbled on the ptarmigan, most conspicuously perched on the top of a rock. He was in the act of taking his marks, to know the place again, in the hope of finding me, when my shot abruptly put an end to his schemes. The birds were equally dissatisfied with the sound, as their four-footed ally of the crags, and made the same use of their wings as she did of her legs. It was now late; but as the man had some idea of where they might be, I could not resist the temptation of giving them one more trial. We had almost given up hope, when they a third time rose, very wild, fully a hundred yards off, from a knoll of moss, where they were at feed. My time was now up, so I descended the mountain, well pleased with my day's sport, notwithstanding the mishap at the end."

Ptarmigan shooting may be set down as the "caviare to the million:" few will think "the play worth the candle," as the French saw has it; the bird being, moreover, to the gourmand (following our experience of its flavour) pretty much like the Irishman's horse,—very hard to catch, and not worth the trouble when overtaken. Ptarmigan change their plumage about October, when they put on a double suit of feathers, in anticipation of winter. They are then white; in spring they are more brown,

grey, or the same colour as the rocks among which they live.

The common, or White Ptarmigan; White Grouse of British authors.—Sir W. Jardine, whose authority, as a naturalist, is unquestionably great, speaks of

WHITE GROUSE, OR PTARMIGAN.

frequent so-called specimens of this species, *Lagopus mutus*, thus doubtfully:—"This bird, delicately marked in its summer dress, and of a snowy whiteness in that of winter, has generally been considered as a native of both the American and European continents. The comparison, however, of many specimens of grouse, which become white in winter, leads us to believe that the distinction of species is still undetermined. We have seen, however, what we

consider the *L. mutus*, from Arctic America, and also among the packages of birds which are said by the poulterers to come from Norway (in a frozen state). But many of the birds mentioned as ptarmigan, from various localities, cannot always with certainty be referred to that of Britain."

The common ptarmigan is clothed during winter with a plumage of pure white, with the exception of the black markings of the outer tail feathers and shafts of quills, and the space between the bill and the eyes. In summer the markings turn dark grey, or brown-grey, wattled with black; thus, in all seasons, taking, by the beautiful ordination of Providence, those hues, that, assimilating with the grey rock, or snow-covered pinnacle, best assist its concealment from the piercing sight of its feathered assailants, and preserve it from the more erring aim of its human enemy. The female, at breeding time, changes her plumage towards a fine ochreous yellow, crossed broadly with black, while the under parts remain white. It is, as we have heard, unknown whether the male also changes his plumage at the season of incubation, or whether the change to greyish hues takes place when he moults. Although this bird now inhabits none but those Alpine solitudes all but inaccessible to the enterprise of man, it is said, in some of our oldest writers, to have been frequent enough, at one period, in the hilly parts of England, such as Westmoreland and Cumberland. We must climb the peaks of Ben Voirla, Ben Veira, and Ben

Lomond in the western highlands, and dwell for a space in the shepherd's hut of the mountains of Ross and Inverness, ere we can now accomplish the feat of securing a few brace of these wild birds. The Grampian range is the most southerly resort of the ptarmigan at present. It is often tracked by its call, a low, wild, wailing note, or by the cluck of the female. They appear little to dread the sight of man, but will, amid the mountain mosses, run before him, or drop from ledge to ledge of the precipitous rock, as slowly and silently as though practising a lesson taught by reason. In the spring and summer they are very tame. Their flight is low and wheeling, and the whiz of the wing not to be heard even in the rarefied atmosphere of their chosen dwelling-place. Their nests are very difficult of discovery, being placed under rocks and stones; and the female, following the true bird instinct, always leaves the nest in being alarmed, and wheels away over the rocks, clucking as she goes. This bird is not indigenous to Ireland.

The *Lagopus rupestris* is considered a distinct species, in the British list of "Ptarmigan," by some authors; but as Mr. Yarrel is far from satisfied that the *L. rupestris* is anything but "a seasonal or sexual variety" of the *L. mutus*, we will only give the specification of the female bird, shot by Sir W. Jardine, on Ben More, Sutherlandshire. "The rock ptarmigan.—The entire length is rather more than twelve inches; seven and a half inches from the wing to the

third quill; of the tarsus, one inch five-eighths, equalling that of the centre toe, nail included; the nail about five-eighths. On the upper parts, the dark or ground colour of the feathers is deep brownish, or pitch black; but each feather is cut into, or partially barred, with ochreous-yellow, on the back and tail coverts, being tipped and edged with a much paler tint, sometimes approaching to yellowish white; the quills, secondaries, and shoulders are pure white; the shafts of the former black, and having sometimes a brownish black tint accompanying their length; the tail contains sixteen feathers; the outer pair are edged with white along the outer web; and, with the next six, on each side, are dull black, white at the tips, where they are also slightly worn; the upper coverts reach within a quarter of an inch of the end of the tail. On the cheeks, throat, neck, and breast, the yellow and pale markings predominate to a greater extent; and, on the latter, assume more the form of bars; on the belly, flank, and other lower parts, the yellow markings still prevail, and assume a greater space in the form of transverse broken masses, while, in the lower part of the breast and centre of the belly, there are many pure white feathers, which give a paler or more hoary shade to these parts; the tarsi and half of the toes only are strongly feathered; the nails are brownish black, pale at the base." Now the size of the common ptarmigan is from fourteen to sixteen inches in the male bird, and sometimes larger; in the female fourteen inches. Sir W.

Jardine's specimen of the female of the rock ptarmigan, twelve inches and a half; average length of male specimen, thirteen and a half. The rich, soft, dark pencillings of ochreous yellow of the female at breeding season, render it a peculiarly beautiful bird; its plumage being much brighter and clearer than that of the male in the autumnal months. Their food is supposed to be the mountain plants of their own inaccessible regions.

The common ptarmigan seems completely inaccessible to a sensation of cold. Ever avoiding the sun's rays, he chooses the pinnacles of the mountains, and its biting frosts; and when the snow melts at the sides of the mountains, he still ascends higher and higher. In Mr. Daniel's account of them he says, "Ptarmigans are thinly scattered upon the lofty hills near Keswick, in Cumberland, and some few in Wales. . . . They are silly birds, and so tame as to bear driving like poultry, and to suffer a stone to be flung at them without rising; yet, notwithstanding this gentleness of disposition, it is impossible to domesticate them; they refuse to eat when caught, and always die soon afterwards. So heedless are they, that it is not even necessary to have a dog to find them. As an edible, they taste so like a grouse as to be scarcely distinguishable, and keep in summer in small packs; but never, like the grouse, take shelter in the heath, but beneath loose stones. In winter the white ptarmigans assemble and fly in flocks, still preserving their stupid tame-

ness: at that season, when they perceive any person, they remain quiet upon the snow, to avoid being seen; and are often betrayed by their very whiteness, which surpasses that of the snow.

The plumage of the ptarmigan not only becomes of this snow white in winter, but much thicker, closer, and more downy; thus proving the beautiful economy of nature: for as colour is well known to influence the rate by which bodies acquire, reflect, or part with heat; and as white is the colour which most readily and perfectly reflects it, and which most difficultly parts with it, so a body clothed with that colour shall retain heat longest, and, therefore, be better fitted to exist in the coldest latitudes. It is the limited expenditure of vital heat, therefore, in the ptarmigan, that is supposed to influence its choice of situation. Mr. Daniel thus scientifically puts an example:—"If two animals, one of a black colour and the other white, be placed in a higher temperature than that of their own body, the heat will enter the one that is black with the greatest rapidity, and elevate its temperature considerably above the other. But when these animals are placed in a situation, the temperature of which is considerably lower than their own, the black animal will give out its heat by radiation to every surrounding object colder than itself, and speedily have its temperature reduced; while the white animal will part with its heat by radiation at a much slower rate."

THE RETRIEVER.

Though not so essential to the suite of the sportsman in pursuit of game as the water-spaniel to the wild-fowl shooter, the Retriever is a most useful, as well as becoming, companion in the field. In cover, it is not possible to dispense with his services without a vast sacrifice of game: for such is the loss of all badly wounded birds, and, indeed, of nearly every head of game that is hit. In thick underwood, not only will a dog recover nine birds out of ten that a man would miss, but it disturbs them also just in an inverse ratio. Pointers and setters are both trained to retrieve, but it is a bad economy; the retriever should be limited to hunting, in or out of cover, for wounded game, and bringing it to bag. There are various opinions as to the best cross from which this valuable sporting servant can be bred. Perhaps as good as any, is that between a strong, low-sized setter bitch and a pure Newfoundland dog. Our own bias leans to a cross with a Newfoundland dog and a pointer bitch; animals so bred certainly excel in nose. The pointer itself can be taught to retrieve; but when so used, he must not hunt in company.

A gentleman, of the name of Callender, an inhabitant of Edinburgh, had not long since a retrieving pointer, which, when bringing to him in its mouth a bird he had just shot, hit upon the scent of another, a wonderful instance of nose. The animal coolly laid the bird on the ground, and putting his foot

upon it, to prevent its escape, as it was only wounded, pointed to that it had found. The same creature also evinced extraordinary sagacity on another occasion, when his master was shooting in Berwickshire, on the banks of the Tweed, which is opposite to Tillmouth Castle. The birds which he had sprung made across the river, there being a preserve on the other side; but one of them, which he had shot while crossing, fell into the water, and was carried down by the stream. He would not suffer his dog to move until he had reloaded, when, on getting the word—"Seek dead," the observant animal galloped down the bank until he recovered sight of the floating pheasant, and then, plunging into the river, brought it safe to shore.

The author had a retriever, as perfect in its business as, perhaps, one of its kind ever was; bred between the bull-dog and smooth terrier. This rare creature was as complete in all the duties of a land-retriever as in those of a water-spaniel. She was more than amphibious: living, in fact, in the water, especially the sea, whenever the opportunity was afforded her. In sagacity and courage, if she ever had a parallel, she never had a superior. A shooting party, of which he was one, having returned to lunch, a keeper reported, that as the woods were being beaten for pheasants, two or three woodcocks had been flushed. It was very early in the season for such visitors, and a sweepstakes of £5 each was made, to be divided among the subscribers, according to the number of cocks that each should bring home

by dinner-time. In crossing the lawn close to the house, on their way to the covers intended to be drawn, a cock was put up from a holly-bush, which one of the company was fortunate enough to bring down.

A RETRIEVER.

This was a promising beginning, but it brought little luck, as, in spite of the closest beating, not another could be met with. Just as the word was given to call the beaters out and to prepare for home, however, and when it was so dark that it was impossible to see objects a dozen paces off, a woodcock

sprung close to the narrator, and, without being able to cover it, he fired in the line it was flying, and thought he heard something fall and flutter among the underwood. It could not, nevertheless, be found; and after losing his time and his patience, he was just back soon enough not to lose his dinner to boot.

Now this bird was of no ordinary value, for it would have entitled him to one half of a sweepstakes of £35, the whole of which would otherwise go to the possessor of the first woodcock that was shot. In due course, the lucky subscriber claimed the money, which, at the instance of the author, was withheld for the night, as he urged he had knocked down a cock, that would most probably be yet brought to bag. To make one great final effort, he procured the bird which had been killed, and laying it carefully before his retriever, with a strong light thrown on it, and then drawing it repeatedly across her nose, he returned with her to the cover, and cheering her with the signal—"Seek dead!" he put her into it. After waiting till midnight, and using every effort to reclaim her, he returned, leaving her there. In the morning she made her way into the breakfast-room, during the meal, with the dead woodcock in her mouth!

As a proof of her courage, she would leap, at a signal from his hand, from off the paddle-box of a steam-vessel of the largest class, when going at full speed, and in the heaviest weather, with seas rolling as high as the funnel. Alas, poor Venom! he may surely say of thee, he "shall ne'er look upon thy like again."

CHAPTER VIII.

QUAIL SHOOTING.

This little bird is not a regular object of pursuit with our sportsmen, for the best of reasons—that it is never found in any numbers in this country. It is a bird of passage, essentially migratory, and, as a native, can scarcely be claimed by any of the British islands, except Ireland. Here, to our experience, it frequently breeds; not like the woodcock, or any variety, indeed, of migratory birds—only when it cannot manage to go elsewhere—but apparently from choice, and habits of domestication. We have frequently watched bevies of quail, in several of the Irish counties, from their shells till they have found their way to our game-bags—and, indeed, to our stomach; for observe, your quail is the daintiest of eating. When the English shooter lights upon them, it is by chance, among the partridges, in September; but the Irish amateur of the trigger falls in with them "all alone by themselves," among

the potatoes, in October. We think they may be classed among Irish game, without fear of a bull. No doubt they are capricious, and may, some fine day, desert the shores of the Emerald Isle, as they are said to have done those of Great Britain; but for the present, St. Patrick may safely claim them for his own.

Pointers and setters are both partial to the scent of the quail, setting it as readily as the pheasant or the partridge. It resorts to the stubbles, and occasionally the long after-growth of the meadows: during the morning it is most readily met with. All the authorities on shooting leave this specimen of the craft untouched, or nearly so; indeed, with one exception, no modern sporting book treats of the bird at all from original materials. This exception is a paper which appeared, some few years since, in the "New Sporting Magazine;" the result of some considerable experience in the English history of the quail. The author seems to have studied his lore in the Isle of Thanet; where, he says, this bird is to be found at all seasons of the year. That locality, he states, was formerly so famous for it, either from its vicinity to the French coast, or the quantity of grain grown there, that people resorted to it from great distances, for the express purpose of quail shooting. Latterly, however, he says, their numbers have considerably fallen off; but still the sportsman, in the beginning of September, may kill from two to three brace a-day. "Along the banks of the Thames,

below Purfleet," says this writer, "several farmers and sportsmen have assured me, that, about the beginning of November, a time at which the departure of the main body has taken place, a small number of quails make their appearance, and continue during the winter, always a short distance from the river's edge. These are evidently the young birds of the second bevy, who, for some reason, seek that particular situation after the migration of the rest of their species."

As most of the migratory birds—*all* those that may be called game of the second class—are more scarce with us than they were, it follows that the quail is in a similar category. For this cause we find them more plentiful in Ireland than England; the former island being also infinitely better supplied with woodcocks and snipe than the latter. The migratory tribes, no doubt, recede before civilization, and are found precisely in the inverse ratio to the cultivation of the district. As they cannot be subjected to the process of preserving, the day will probably come when one of the species will be as rare as a bustard is now.

It is said, that quails do not pack except when some strong local cause drives them to associate together, for an especial purpose. The family of migratory birds is not certainly gregarious; but our own experience of this bird leads us to think it is an exception to the general rule of the species. We have never found it in that state of isolation, common

to the snipe and woodcock. It is met with singly, no doubt, but where one is, you may be sure there are more not far off; while very often one woodcock is all that fifty acres will furnish, with the closest beating of the cover. With our savoury recollections of this feathered *bonne bouche*, we are unwilling to surrender it to the calumnies of those few who have thought it even worthy their ill favour. "Quails," says the author of "Rural Sports," "seldom form themselves into coveys, except when their wants unite the feeble family to their mother; or some powerful cause urges at once the whole species to assemble and traverse together the extent of the ocean, holding their course to the same distant land: but this forced association does not subsist after their alighting, and finding in their adopted country that they can live at all. The appetite of love is their only tie, and even this is momentary: so soon as passion has spent its force, the male abandons his mate to the labour of raising the family; the young quails are hardly full grown when they separate, or, if kept together, fight obstinately, and their quarrels are terminated only by their mutual destruction." It must be confessed this is no amiable character of our quarry, and belongs to its natural (or rather unnatural) history, more than its sporting treatment. But the fact is, quail shooting is not legitimately a branch of English shooting.

The Common Quail (*Tetrao coturnix*).—The quail seems to be a more permanent resident of Ireland

than of Great Britain: in the latter kingdom, indeed, it is now but an occasional visitant; although, thirty years back, it was a pretty regular attendant of the

THE QUAIL.

stubble fields near the coasts, at their season, in the mild south and midland counties of England. This bird is so wary, that after the first time it is wonderfully difficult to flush. Almost all the birds in our market, of this species, are those imported alive (to fatten) by the London poulterers, from France; where they are most abundant, and where they are taken by nets, into which the imitation of their call entraps them. But in Sicily is the greatest quail harvest. On its coast, in Italy, and the Greek islands, they will arrive by hundreds of thousands. Formerly the principal revenue of the Bishop of Capri was the

sum produced by the annual visits of these birds: they have been known to have been taken, at one season, to the number of a hundred and fifty thousand.

In Ireland, the farmers on the coast, south of Strangford Loch, are very successful in the capture of quails. We have known them to bring in five and six brace of these delicate birds, the produce of the day's sport. Jardine says, in 1836 a gentleman shot, near Belfast Bay, in one day, ten brace of quails.

The nest of the quail is made by the female; its eggs are deposited on the bare ground: they are somewhat similar in appearance to those of the snipe, being deeply marked with olive-green, but are of different shape. We subjoin Jardine's account of this bird:—"The geographical range of the quail is of great extent, reaching northward to Russia and Scandinavia, found in the intermediate countries of temperate heat, and abounding in continental India and Africa. We possess specimens, which do not materially differ from each other, from Madeira, Alpine India, the plains of India, China, Cape of Good Hope, and Southern Europe. A specimen, shot at Jardine Hall in autumn, has the crown nearly black, the feathers edged with pale chesnut; streaks of ochre yellow run over each eye; and the centre space between the eyes, and bill, and auriculars, are chesnut. Colour of the upper parts black, having the shafts and a lanceolate mark in the centre of each

ochreous yellow, palest at the tip, where the wings join the body; the central markings are wanting, and the black is relieved by grey tips and wavy bars of Sienna yellow; throat, pale ochreous yellow, bounded by a deep, blackish-brown gorget, and on the sides cut into by a dark stripe of the same colour, running from the gape, and turning inwards near the middle of the pale space; breast yellowish wood-brown, shading into pale ochreous on the lower parts; on the breast, the feathers are marked with two round or oval spots, on the exterior of each web; on the flanks these patches border each feather irregularly, bounding a pale open space along the shafts, which is nearly pure white."

The above was a female quail; as are all or most of those that are met with in autumn. The plumage of the male is darker; there is more chesnut in the tints, and the breast is of a reddish brown, pale, and without spots, while the chin and throat are brown-black, so mingled as to form, in that part, which is pale space, in the female, a sort of cross.

CHAPTER IX.

BUSTARD SHOOTING.

As the reader's acquaintance with this bird, once the pride of our wild feathered tribes, will most probably be confined to such specimens as he shall cultivate an acquaintance with in a museum, a very short allusion to its sporting annals will suffice for his curiosity on that head. According to old Markham, a stalking-horse was even in his day essential to enable the pursuer to accomplish a shot; and the shepherds were wont to dress out a hurdle with green boughs, behind which the sportsman would lie in wait for his game. From this it will be gathered, that it is very long since Bustard shooting was common to our island. In the year 1800, Daniel says, there was one shot which measured six feet from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other; and three feet from the point of the beak to the extremity of the tail. Buffon tells us, that one was shot in France, in his time, which had "no less than ninety

doubloons in its stomach." If the English bustards were in the habit of carrying so much money about them, there can be no difficulty in accounting for their present scarcity.

THE BUSTARD.

The Great Bustard (*Otis Tarda*);—of the family of the Struthionidæ, or Ostriches.—We must speak of this, our largest land bird, rather in the past than in the present tense. This is one of the birds that

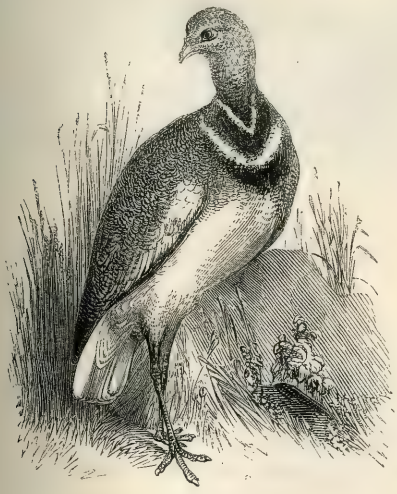
have fled before population and agriculture. It was formerly seen in flocks of fifty, or more, upon extensive downs or heaths: such as Salisbury Plain, the heaths of Sussex, the Dorsetshire uplands, Newmarket Heath, and the like; and as far north as East Lothian, in Scotland: but their appearance has become almost a tradition. Mr. Yarrel states, that nineteen were seen together at Westcape, in Norfolk, so late as 1819; and that they are carefully preserved by the proprietor. Royston Heath, Devonshire and Wiltshire, Suffolk and Lincolnshire have been mentioned as localities, from whence occasional specimens are procured. In Ireland they seem to have existed, although now extinct.

The male bustard weighs about twenty-seven pounds, if a fine bird; the neck a foot long, the legs a foot and a half, the wings short in proportion to the body, about four feet from the tip of the one to the other. The bird is powerful in flight, but extremely slow in rising; its preservation was, therefore, chiefly maintained by its great range of sight: living in open plains where it was almost impossible to approach it without discovery. Without a hedge or fence to screen them, how could the sportsman mark his game?—how could the fowler creep among them? It is recorded, however, that the bustard was run down by greyhounds. After feeding voraciously on the large heath-worms of their native plains, and upon the berries of the plants incident to their localities, they became so pursed out and fat, as

to be unable to fly without great difficulty. Thus flapping its wings, in order to get enough air underneath them to permit its rising, it would run before the enemy, and often be caught. The bustard has a pouch under the tongue to contain water. There is little record of them in North Britain. One was shot in 1803 in Morayshire. The rifle is used to shoot them, as well as the ordinary fowling-piece. "The male bustard will stand two feet six or eight inches in height, and, when the lengthened feathers, which most of them possess on the throat, or sides of the jaw, are raised, they have a very bold and commanding appearance." The back of neck, shoulders, &c., have reddish-orange feathers, transversed with interrupted bars of black. The head, neck, and breast are bluish-grey, shading at the lower part of the breast into pale grey and pure white. Outer coverts, greyish white, secondaries, deep brown-black: very powerful quills, the first sharp, the under with their outer web expanding, and becoming brown or black at their extremities. The mid-tail feathers, reddish-orange, with white tips, and a black bar, crossing at about an inch from the end, and then a narrower one towards the base. Generic characters: bill almost straight, depressed slightly at the base; open nostrils; long legs; the tarsi naked above the knees; toes, three forwards, bordered with a scutellated membrane; and short wings, powerful; second, third, and fourth quills largest, nearly equal; first narrow towards the point.

Type: *Otis tarda;* Europe, Asia, Africa, New Holland.

Note. — Inhabit open plains and champaign countries, where vegetation is rankly luxuriant: polygamous; run swiftly.



THE LITTLE BUSTARD.

The Little Bustard (*Otis Minor*). This is an unfrequent British visitant; subject to a very great change of plumage, of which we cannot accurately speak, since it appears in England only after incubation is over, and in its more homely garb. One was killed near Montrose, in Scotland, in the winter of 1833.

THE HARE.

CHAPTER X.

HARE SHOOTING.

We trust it is as unnecessary to tell the courteous reader, that, in walking through an aviary, he is not to knock the gold and silver pheasants on the head with his cane, as that it is unlawful for him to shoot a hare, in a country where harriers are kept, or a district favourable for coursing. Still there is ample space and room enough for this sport; which, in some places, absolutely becomes an operation not to be dispensed with in the morality of sporting, so to speak. Without going into the question of the con-

venience of the practice, it is enough for our purpose here to state, that in many parts of England, where game preserving is very rigorously carried on, hares so abound as to be a gigantic nuisance. In such places hare shooting is a virtue; and that our young friends may excel in that good work, we put before them the best advice in our power.

We do not treat you as going out to look for hares, but rather as in some place where they most do congregate. If we thought you had any difficulty in the matter of finding this species of game, we could point out that it keeps to the standing corn, so long as any is to be met with; and that when no more remains, hares resort for shelter to covers and hedges, to fallows and long wild grass, to the sides and bottoms of old dry ditches and grips; and that after heavy rains, which fill the ditches, and cause dripping from the trees and hedges, they are to be found lying out upon close wheat stubbles. When it is again dry, they return to covert; there remaining till the frost has robbed the trees of their leaves; and then, no hiding being afforded by the woods, they betake themselves for good, to the open fields, and make their forms, wherever enough of rough vegetation exists to enable them to crouch among it. Young wheat fields are their favourite localities, and occasionally, old ploughed fallows; in these, within a range of some thirty or forty yards distance from the hedges, you will be most likely to light upon them. This, we say, we should have told you,

did we suppose you would ever condescend to look for hares.

But we see you in the midst of a preserve, where they are as numerous as the sands upon the sea-shore. Accept some of our maxims as applicable to such a case. Should you by any accident espy a hare on her form, don't fire at her sitting; if not because it is unbecoming a sportsman, at all events, because by putting her up, you will have the best chance of putting her into your bag. A hare, when running, especially across you, is very easily shot; whereas an old puss on her form, is very far from being an easy object to hit. In shooting them when the lands lie in high ridges, should a hare run across ridge and furrow, take care not to fire till she is rising, and about mid-way between the furrow and the ridge. If you wait till she has got to the top of the land, her head, which is the most vulnerable part, will be covered by her haunches: for the same reason, when a hare is running straight from you, on level ground, just aim so that you may seem to skim her back with your charge.

When a hare approaches you, wait till she is well within reach of shot; then whistle, or make some sign—upon which she will stop for an instant, and then turn to one side or the other. Take her when her side is towards you: it's long odds you miss her entirely should you fire when she is coming "stem on," as the sailors say. It is within the letter of the law to shoot leverets at all times; but it is unsports-

manlike to shoot them until they are pretty well grown.

The hare being capable of carrying away a great charge of shot, as well as of turning one that would deal death to any other sort of game—except the deer tribe—it may be as well to hint the material, as well as the method, by which it may most efficiently be assailed. If possible, let her be within forty yards for a cross shot, or thirty when going straight from you. There is no excuse for the sportsman, who goes out expressly to shoot hares, loading with smaller shot than No. 4. Large shot does its business effectively when it does hit. One of its pellets will kill, should it take effect; while No. 6 or 7, should it reach the object, can only wound or maim. If the young shooter, says a very practical authority, discover, as he will, that, in shooting in covert, he must sometimes fire either at very short distances, or not get a shot at all, it will be essential for him either to acquire the knack of shooting on one side of his game, or to let it go free. The latter is the plan I should recommend, except in the case of a woodcock likely to fly out of bounds; which, within forty-eight hours, may, perhaps, be regaling himself in an Irish bog. This gentleman says, no one who goes out to shoot hares should use less than No. 2 or 3 shot.

The instinct of animals is, in almost every case, superior to the reason of man; for the one is unerring, the other constantly at fault. It is singular to observe, also, that every power shared by man in

common with other animals, is possessed by him in a *far* inferior manner. His sight is less piercing, his nose less penetrating, his motion less swift, than that of the brute creation. He is more helpless in his infancy, and less courageous in his death. The very insect race beat him in geometrical precision. The bee and the spider were the first, the original inventors of the octagon and arch. The beaver is a better economist of space; and many birds are endowed with organs of hearing, in comparison with which man can only deem himself aristocratically deaf. It is well, then, for the vanity of the human race, that he can boast of being divinely endowed with that faculty of speech, by which we can take full advantage of our otherwise limited resources; which enables generation after generation to act in progressive concert with its species, and thus renders subservient to our uses, pleasures, and adornments, the wonderful gifts and graces of every known tribe of the animate creation.

Among swift-footed quadrupeds, we may claim precedence for the hare. The mechanism of its frame is such, that every joint and muscle tends to promote the rapidity of its locomotion on the grounds to which its instinct confines it. Its loins are extremely nervous and muscular; and these act upon the hindermost limbs, whose length and power render them capable of immensely rapid contraction and expansion: its fore-legs are in proportion short; thus enabling the creature to form that succession of leaps,

which is its real mode of progression, and by which it claims affinity with the marsupial tribes. "It is this curtailment of the fore-legs, in comparison with the hinder, that directs the hare instinctively to seek a rising ground, when flying from its pursuers." The under-surfaces of its feet are, furthermore, provided amply with protecting hair; it has five toes to its fore-feet, and only four behind. The mean length of the hare, when full grown, is about two feet; its weight is various: five, six, seven, eight, nine, some even have been known to weigh twelve, pounds. The colour of the fur of the hare varies with the climate, and with the season. Even in England, black and milk-white hares have been met with; pied ones have been talked about; and every gradation of grey is incident to the animal. The ordinary tint is, however, an iron-grey; the chin white; the throat of a rusty yellow hue; the belly white; the breast reddish; its facial extremity black. Thus, in harmony with the tints around her, is she clothed, in the coldest regions, ever with the lightest hues. Blaine forcibly remarks, that the want of the elastic padding, which bounds the soles of the feet of some animals, as dogs, for instance, is unfavourable to the progress of hares on fallows, and also on all wet and deep soils, which, it is well known, they constantly avoid when they can. When left to choose their own track, they always take a dry one for treading on; and it is plain, that their woolly sacks admirably adapt their feet to resist the ill effects

of pressure from the rough surfaces they must pass over by this preference.

The common hare, according to the Levitical law, was classed among the ruminant animals; zoologists, however, give it a place among the *rodentia*, or gnawing animals. But even at this present time some naturalists favour the former notion, and instance the singular contraction in the stomach of the hare as being akin to the stomachic cavities observable in the true *ruminantia*. The cleft of the upper lip, also, which renders the member so extremely mobile, and capable of the constant quivering motion observable, strengthens the opinion of these writers. The jaws of the hare, nevertheless, remain stationary, while rumination is brought about by a grinding action; the hare moves its jaws only when browsing, and the excessive mobility of the nose seems rather to affect the marvellous delicacy of its olfactory powers, than the qualities of the ruminant. This creature possesses "six prismatic grinders in the upper, and five in the lower, jaw; the upper jaw has likewise subsidiary incisors."

If we examine both the eyes and the ears of the hare, we shall be at once struck by their adaptation, as we have before observed, to the purposes of its existence and of flight from danger. Its eyes are prominent, the balls half out of the head, and so placed, that without any alteration of position, the circle of vision is remarkably large; commanding an extensive field of view, before and behind. That she cannot see *at*

once in both directions, is often the cause of her capture. Her ears can be thrown back to the very base, at will; thus enabling her to drink in, as it were, the very faintest sound of pursuit. The eyelids of the hare seem to be seldom or never used, as she does not possess "the accessory organ or nictating membrane;" her eyes are always unveiled, even in sleep, like those of fishes. The tail, or seat of the hare, is black, and white on the under part, short, and in the male usually whitest,—a fact which gives the sportsman a clue to the sex of his game. "The anatomy of the ear favours its acceptation of sounds generally, but particularly for receiving such as come from behind." Thus the hare lays one ear forward and one behind, hearing, it is said, more perfectly the sounds that issue from her back than those that are straight-forward. The auditive canal is partly bony and partly soft; "and when the skull of a hare is placed horizontally before a spectator, the long portion of it is seen to protrude itself nearly half an inch with a backward inclination." It is believed that the age of the hare is from nine or ten to twelve years: it is like the rabbit, of extreme fruitfulness. Hares have enemies so numberless, that were it not for their prolific generations they would soon become extinct. The hare knows the female by the scent, its organs of every sense being exquisitely sensitive. When the female is about eleven months old, she begins to breed, and is believed to bring forth young several times in the course of the year: the

gestating term is the same as in the rabbit—thirty-one days. The young are fed by the mother about a month, or not quite so long. Her fecundity is prodigious. One writer mentioning, that "a brace of hares (the doe being pregnant when shut up) were enclosed in a large walled garden, and proper plants supplied for their subsistence. At the expiration of twelve months the garden was examined, and the produce was fifty-seven hares. On the manor of Sir Thomas Gooch, also, there were six thousand hares killed in 1806." At Fonthill, during its occupation by the eccentric Mr. Beckford, hares swarmed to such an extent, and had become so tame, in consequence of their never being molested under any circumstances whatever, that they might be seen parading the alleys and green avenues of the park, in files, as the Guards march the streets of London.

The hare is nocturnal in her habits: upon her return from her rambles, she retires to her form, where she squats under cover of brushwood, a hedge, or whatever else may contribute to her concealment; not that she appears to have any notion of the sort, for she sits as open on her form as is well possible. The neutral colours of her fur much more assist her ambush than any apparent care of her own. Many diseases, to which hares are subjected, are known. They become dropsical with too succulent food. Their fore-teeth occasionally grow out when kept in places where they

have no wood to gnaw. In the same manner, we find that bears, and other savage animals, are subject to the protrusion of horny parts; such as the inordinate growth of their claws, as well as their teeth or fangs. To secure hare warrens from the enemies —such as stoats, weasels, ferrets, polecats, badgers, foxes, &c.—of these defenceless animals, they should be walled round. Mr. Beckford's (the sporting writer's, not the anti-sporting preserver's) directions for a hare warren are these:—A wood of nearly thirty acres, cut into many walks, set with traps, and sown with parsley, which will induce the hare to keep at home. A small warren should have but one walk in it: and no dog be permitted to enter it. When, as the seasons close, the hares become shy of the traps from having often been caught, it will be necessary to drive them in with spaniels, &c. The geographical range of the hare is great; its varieties, in consequence, are numerous: the Alpine hare; the Baikal hare; the changing hare, that of Brazil; the Cape; of North America; are among them, the minute hare of Chili being the most diminutive, and said to be little bigger than the mole; it is reported to be fine eating, and is called by the Chilians, "cuy."

CHAPTER XI.

RABBIT SHOOTING.

This sport, like, indeed, all others, is differently practised in different places, and by different persons. The best sample of it we ever enjoyed was in the woods belonging to the Earl of Winterton, adjoining his seat, Shillinglee Park, in Sussex. This nobleman keeps the most perfect pack of rabbit beagles probably in existence, and goes out with them quite *en prince*. Having caused the covers he purposes shooting to be stopped (after the fashion of fox-hunting), he sallies forth with his Lilliputian pack, cheers them into cover, turns them with his horn, and, in short, carries on his rabbiting with all the pomp and circumstance of perfect woodcraft. His hounds are about the size of well-grown kittens, and as full of fire as lucifer matches. Their cry is "as tunable as lark," and quite as shrill, being the completest canine counter-tenor that may be conceived. This is shooting the rabbit in such a style as ought to recon-

W. HARVEY, DEL. FRED. W. BRANSTON, SC.

RABBIT SHOOTING.

cile the defunct to his fate: but it's not everywhere the coney is demolished as at Shillinglee.

All kinds of rabbits, tame or wild, are in best flavour from November till the commencement of February. Some naturalists contend that they prefer a seat above ground, and only burrow for the sake of refuge, in case they are in danger. This may be partly true; as, also, that they use their burrows as shelter from inclement weather. Even the hare will burrow under the snow, when it lies deeply. It is certain, that where they enjoy quiet and privacy, they are constantly to be seen above the surface, even though that be a warren. In their miscellaneous resorts, they select, as places to lie in, thick hedgerows; particularly those having furze or fern growing on their banks, and old, dry stone, or sand, pits, whose sides are overgrown with bramble and scrubby underwood.

Early morning, and after sunset, are the most esteemed periods of the day for this sport. Still, the best way of setting about it must depend on local and other circumstances. If the place, in which you pursue it, be of some extent, by going round it, walking slowly and noiselessly, and sometimes creeping, you may get more shots than by any other means. If, on the other hand, your range is limited, and the rabbits have been much disturbed, your plan must be to conceal yourself till a chance offers: do not then fire too often from the same spot. Where the ground is undulating, by keeping under cover of the brows of

the hills, rabbits may be approached. In this case lie down, and make a rest for your gun. Then push it gently forward, close to the ground, without exposing yourself, until you feel that it is sufficiently far advanced for the stock to fit your shoulder. Then raising your head, without your hat, endeavour to pick out a double shot, if possible. If the ground be a level, without ambush of any kind, you may make one with hurdles twined with furze bushes, or other bushes, with which the rabbits are familiar. The subjoined rules for this sport are abbreviated from an authority already quoted:—

Avoid walking over the burrows, when you can do so: being connected with each other, not only is the ground thereby shaken, but the sound is conveyed to a greater distance than would be easily credited. Being quick of hearing, rabbits will not stir if they suspect an enemy is nigh.

As their sense of smelling is even more acute than that of hearing, never attempt to approach them with your back to the wind.

The moment you have fired at a rabbit with a single gun, if he be not quite dead, run up to him; for rabbits are exceedingly tenacious of life, and however severely wounded, will instinctively scramble into a burrow, if possible. But as it will often happen that a long arm and a screw-ramrod will recover them, whenever rabbits are supposed to be hit, the burrow they take should be always examined at the least, if not probed in this way.

A small, quick, mute retriever, that will crouch close to you, and only stir at your bidding, will save you the trouble of the run, cause less disturbance, and will often recover a wounded rabbit which you would have chased in vain.

When shooting in woods, at all times be extremely cautious when and where you fire: let no shot, however tempting, induce you to do so unless you are sure neither man or dog be within range at the time.

Rabbits, in some neighbourhoods, are shot from trees. This is said to be the poachers' way of doing business; but, though we say it under the rose, a good many wholesome sporting hints may be had from that fraternity. Moreover, with the exception of the style of rabbit shooting spoken of in the outset of this chapter, it is for the most part a secret, solitary amusement—more akin to angling than the spirit stirring business of the trigger.

THE FERRET.

THE FERRET.—FERRETING.

The Ferret has just so much to do with our ordinary sporting recreations, as to entitle it, or rather its uses, to a place in this volume; and, grace to modern improvement, its application is not the barbarous contrivance it was in times gone by. The practice of "coping," or muzzling, this lithesome little creature, is scarcely ever had recourse to now: the horrid custom of sewing up its mouth is utterly abandoned. Indeed, if left unconstrained, it is found to bolt the rabbit with far more spirit. A cord is occasionally made fast to its neck; and by means of knots marked on it, as on sea lead-lines, it is

known how far he has run. This, however, should be carefully handled, where any danger exists of its becoming entangled with the roots of trees, or any other substances of a like kind. Ferreting should not be begun earlier than October, as the young rabbits are not till then strong or resolute enough to break ground freely. The ferret should be earthed to windward; and the person in charge of him should be perfectly silent. The shooter should so place himself, as to have the whole of the burrows, or as much of them as possible, within command of his eye and his gun. He will find it add much to his sport to have some one in attendance with a reserve gun, who will also load as fast as he fires. The subjoined hints on ferreting were furnished to a friend of ours, by a practical hand of the craft in Essex:—

"The small polecat ferret is decidedly the most active, eager, and best. The ferret should be handled frequently when young, that it may be quite familiar to the touch, otherwise it becomes shy after it has been used a few times, and is very troublesome to catch towards evening, or when the least tired. It should never be fed for eight or ten hours at least, before hunting. Young rats, birds, or rabbits' entrails, are at all times good food for the ferret, and are to be recommended when they can be procured. The ferret may be used any time during the day till four o'clock, except in the depth of winter, when it is advisable never to hunt it after three

o'clock. Always handle a ferret gently, and place your hands under its arms. Be very careful never to snap at it when taking it out of a rabbit hole, or to a certainty your fingers will suffer.

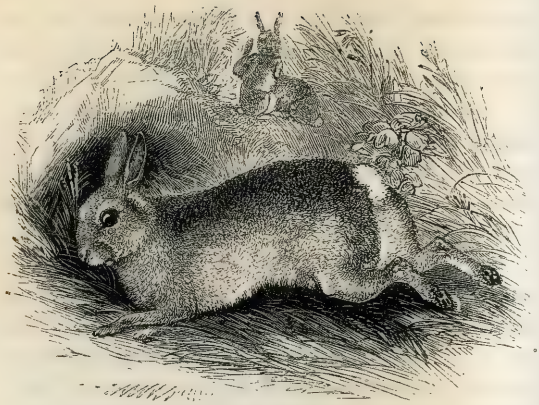
"When shooting, a ferret should not be 'coped,' unless it is a very fast hunter, or a sure killer. A small bell, tied round the neck, will be found useful, and in a large burrow very advantageous. If a ferret is a killer, it is a good plan to blunt the long teeth, which will enable the rabbit to free himself from his antagonist. Never turn a ferret, if shy, too often into the same earth, for, if tired, he is apt to lie up. A predisposition to do so is sometimes indicated (after a ferret is blooded), by its running continually to the mouths of the holes, by a playfulness, and by scratching. When this is the case, remove him immediately.

"A box, about four feet long, is the best habitation for ferrets, having an open front, made of iron. Great care should be taken to keep them quite clean, and to give them plenty of air, as they are, when young particularly, subject to many complaints.

"In some of the southern counties, but more especially in Essex, rabbits, whether from the nature of the soil, as some persons suppose—it is matter of great doubt—remain obstinately sulky for three-fourths of the year, and cannot be induced to move, even with a coped ferret; and will rather have their skins stripped from their backs than bolt, although the greatest caution be used not to shake the earth

or make the least noise. In Essex, rabbits bolt well only during the months of October, November, and December."

The routine of ferret economy, here laid down, savours very strongly of the experience of one who used the net rather than the gun as his engine of destruction against the coney. Shooting, in places where rabbits live, for the most part, under ground, is the slowest of slow sport: ferreting to nets is butchery, as relates to the smaller animals. To put the hand into a contrivance such as they boil cabbages in, and squeeze to death a soft, inoffensive little animal, such as one might imagine a kitten in paradise to be, is certainly not a recreation worthy a true knight. Rabbit shooting, where it may be had as a wild sport, even if unaccompanied with the quick dash and excitement, for which it is distinguished under its most favourable aspect, is at all events divested of the fire-side flavour of grimalkinism: is very neat practice for the young shooter, and certainly not beneath the dignity of his ambition. But if got up in a warren for sixpence a blaze, offal in, with a kill (the warrener always stipulates for the skin), there is something in it singularly *infra dig.* A gun is neither a convenient nor a fitting agent in a warren, nor rabbit shooting the sport of a gentleman anywhere, save in wild woodlands, or such rural districts as disencumber it of all *apropos* of onion sauce.



THE RABBIT.

THE RABBIT.—THE OLDEN BRITISH RABBIT OF ENGLISH AUTHORS.

Rabbit fanciers specify four kinds, or varieties, of the common rabbit: warreners, parkers, hedgehogs, and sweethearts; but the endless diversities, known to those who take an interest in these busy little animals, would fill a volume to describe. The greatest variety is found in the domesticated rabbit, or sweetheart. It is of this kind from which is fattened the *prize*, or *monster rabbit*, that has been known to exceed fifteen pounds in weight, on singular occasions; and which *often* weighs ten pounds.

Of the warrener we have seen the largest specimens in the Isle of Wight, where, in the lonely districts around Alum Bay and Freshwater, these creatures appear to enjoy an Eden of their own: their innumerable little heads and ears peeping forth from the close, swart herbage, as thickly as kingcups in a June meadow. The parker, as its name intimates, frequents parky uplands and open enclosures; the hedgehog kind, like the hare, will take shelter under the hedge-bushes, or short woods and plantations; and these two sorts make no burrow subterraneously, but breed in the most convenient places of their chosen locality.

Some ancient authors have deemed the hare and rabbit but varieties of one species, an error quickly discovered by modern naturalists. In no instance has a hybrid been discovered to breed: although a variety of the rabbit has occurred, which at first led some to suppose that it was a breed between both animals. The similarities of structure are certainly great; but the dissimilarities are equally so. The variety we speak of was large, of the hare colour; bony and lengthy; the flesh, also, was high-flavoured, without the usual rabbit insipidity; and it was said to be, for we speak not after our own knowledge, equal, or superior, to that of the leveret.

The counties of England, in which the rabbit is most plentiful, are, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire, with the Isle of Wight; sandy soils, it will be seen, are most favourable to

its burrowing habits. But when we speak of numbers, our mind naturally reverts to Spain, the native country of the rabbit, where its habits are as peculiar as its flesh. Without speaking of the prodigious quantity of rabbits killed under the denomination of *bunnies*, it is not exaggeration to describe most of the provinces of the kingdom as swarming with them. The Balearic Islands are celebrated for the number of rabbits they contain. In colder climates they are kept within doors, somewhat like our pet lap-ears. The islands above mentioned were once as infested with these animals, as some German districts have been with the great water-rat; and in the time of the Romans, they petitioned the emperor for the means of extirpating them. In these hot climates they are unclean animals, their flesh becoming so rank and tainted as to preclude its use as an article of food. We need say nothing more of the fecundity of an animal so well known, than that it will breed six or seven times in the year, and produce four or five young at each successive breeding. This amazing increase would truly soon over-populate the district, but that, in the wise ordinations of Providence, the rabbit is usually molested by enemies that almost equal its ratio of propagation. When this is not the case, it is found to do but comparatively little injury: and in poor countries, becomes invaluable as an article of food for the lower orders. When this animal lives above ground, its fur becomes more hairy. *Lepus cuniculus*, Linnæus

THE POINTER.

THE Pointer (*Canis avicularis*, Linn.) is of several types, as the English, Spanish, Russian, and a small species, called the French pointer. The best sort, however, by many degrees, is the English; his lineage being by no means indigenous to this country, but coming of various experimental and scientific crosses. Some of our best pointers have been bred from the Spanish race and the British fox-hound. We have little opinion of the Russian pointer, though the setters of that breed are excellent; and still less value for the French animal, so called. Whatever its origin, the smooth English pointer is certainly the most generally useful of all the species of dogs used for finding, and stopping to, game. Once made, his education is completed for life; while the setter requires breaking, more or less, at the commencement of every season. When age, indeed, has taken all fire and all pace out of the setter, he will be found steady enough; but so he would if he were dead: and when the dash has left a sporting dog, the sooner his breath follows it the better. As the young shooter can hardly be expected to breed his own dogs for the gun, we will afford him the counsel of an old gamekeeper in the choice of them: always entreating him to bear in mind, that the sharpest practitioner, or thereabouts, under the sun, is the dog fancier, or merchant.

THE POINTER.

In selectıng a pointer, before you test hıs quality or his teaching, see that he has an open muzzle , that

he is flew-jawed, or short-headed. His eyes should be full, his poll rising to a point, his ears long and well hung, that is, falling between his neck and jaws. His neck and head must be set on straight, so that, when he points, his nose may turn up rather, than otherwise. Let his shoulders be deep, and well let down; and his elbows well in. He should have large straight legs, small feet, a little pointed, standing fair, and the balls small and open. His withers should be narrow, his back slightly curved, his loins broad. He should be deep in the fillets and gaskins; short from the hock to the postern joint, with flat sides fine, marked veins his croup straight, and a fine stern, or tail, set on high, and straight.

Having chosen a dog according to these suggestions, take him into the field, and observe how he behaves. Mark if he be a gallant beater, ranging high, going within himself, his head well up, and to the wind, as endeavouring to catch a flying scent; making his casts, turns, and offers, dashingly, neither hanging on the haunt, nor puzzling for a ground scent. See that he quarters his ground regularly and independently of any other dog hunting in company without leaving the corners of his fields untried. He must neither skulk, shirk, break-field, follow, watch, blink, nor point at sight. He shall not be hard nosed, nor near scented, but wind his birds at long distances, keep his point stanchly; back without jealousy, crouch to bird, dog, or gun, at a signal from the hand, or the word "To-ho!"

without caprice, or standing when you call. If he chap his point, it is a good symptom; if he mouth and hug his game, it shews he relishes his business. If a pointer has not been well trained, when he comes upon the haunt, or run of birds, he will dash, flourish, jump, run at shot, and the like. These, however, are merely the effects of high courage, and may be cured by work and good teaching.

Never beat a dog after he has done wrong, but as nearly in the act as possible. When you punish, have him upon a training-cord, and do not loose him till he has become reconciled to you. Should you let him go before, he will very likely skulk; coil the line round your hand, and keep him at heel for some time, and give him his liberty by degrees. If you observe any signs of skulking, fasten the line to a stake, and leave him behind you for a field or two. Then return, and if he seems cheerful, give him a piece of buiscuit, and caress him. Let him then off, but still fast to the cord; as soon as he beats freely, you may remove it altogether. When dogs are callous to the whip, holding them up by a cord, with a slip-noose, till they become alarmed, will often succeed; use the whip at the same time.

There are some dogs of such very timid dispositions, that they will not bear any punishment. These must be made to punish themselves, by means of check-collars and cross-puzzles. Not knowing, in this case, whence the chastisement comes, they do not take offence from, or dislike to, those with whom

they are hunting. Animals of all sorts are wonderfully quick in comprehending signals: witness the learned pigs, and so forth, that perform such incredible feats, as telling the hour by a watch, and the like; which is done by their observing signals from the showman, that none of the audience can detect. In like manner, dogs come to read aright every expression of their master's face; but not till they have long experience of it. Have patience, then, with your team of pointers, and you will be repaid with interest. They will not understand your looks by intuition; nor probably till they have seen the frown repeated a hundred times, with which you greeted them, when they soiled your first pair of white trowsers by leaping on them.

CHAPTER XII.

PIGEON SHOOTING.

This volume professes to treat of the various descriptions of shooting, which offer themselves to the notice, and for the adoption, of the young amateur of the trigger. For this reason, although we hold the practice of trap-shooting at the dove tribe as far from a sporting exploit, it must be allowed a place in the present chapter. We have in no part of this work entered upon the question of the comparative cruelty of rural sports, because the theory of the lawfulness of man's treatment of the lower animals would be involved in it; a subject too subtle for philosophy, and far too grave for flippant casuistry.

Tame pigeon shooting is, in point of fact, but one of the many forms of gambling; it is never, probably, attempted, except to decide a wager, or to bring off a sweepstakes. Colonel Hawker says of the practice, "It is simply this—if you miss, you are disgraced; and if you kill, you get no credit." A

crack hand at this household species of gunnery may be the worst of general sportsmen; though it must be admitted he will be a good marksman. The first fashionable place of resort for pigeon-matches was the Old Hats; a public-house on the Uxbridge road, that took its name from the shooting carried on in the grounds attached to it, where the pigeon was placed in a hole covered with an old hat, which constituted the original, or primitive, trap. Of late years, the Red House, at Battersea, has superseded the Old Hats, and is now the great metropolitan mart for wager-shooting at pigeons.

The ordinary distance at which the shooter stands from the trap, is one-and-twenty yards; the bounds within which the pigeon must fall, to score, vary from a circumference of sixty to one hundred yards from the trap, as a centre. This trap is a shallow box, twelve inches long, and eight or ten wide; sunk into the ground, so as to be level with it. To this is affixed a sliding lid, with a string to it, held by a person standing near to the shooter. From him he takes his directions to draw back the lid when his aim is taken; and at the moment that he is shooting, another bird is placed in the trap by the purveyor of pigeons. Thus the match goes on with astonishing rapidity—birds and guns being furnished even with more expedition than they can be used. As a rule, the pigeon-match shooter should use more powder and less shot than in ordinary sporting. The larger the gun and the charge, the wider the

range of the shot. Gun-locks for these matches should have fine, quick action, and very powerful springs. The most killing shot will be found No. 4.

So much for the tame shooting of pigeons; now for the fashion of the wild sport. As with the whole species of wild birds, this sport is not a pursuit, but an ambush. You must wait for wild fowl, and not follow them.

The true season for woodpigeon shooting is mid-winter, when the snow lies on the ground. Then they resort to the turnip-fields, and may be turned to good account. Should it be frost, and you cannot approach them, even under cover of a hedge, in consequence of the noise made by the ice breaking as you walk, you will do well to lie in wait for their return from feeding—of course, to leeward of their flight. The favourite food of the woodpigeon in cover, is beech-mast; it will, therefore, be most frequently met with where beech trees abound. Having taken your station in the vicinity of them, be in no hurry to fire till your bird has settled on his perch, and taken his preliminary survey. Be but patient till he has done this, and he may be shot at as easily as a barn-door fowl; but if you move the least before he has settled, he will be off like a rocket.

In September, Captain Lacy says, whilst the leaves are yet green, the cushat, or woodpigeon, is very fond of perching in hedge-rows, particularly of oak and ash; but when the leaves fall, they confine

themselves more to the hollies, and such trees as are mantled with the creeping ivy (for the timid ring-dove ever courts concealment), and where it is next to impossible to spy it out. As it is then certain to fly out the wrong side, if left to itself, the best way is, having first stationed yourself at a favourable point, to whistle to your attendant, who must then face you, and throw a clod, or stick, into the tree.

Autumn is certainly the season, in a gastronomical point of view, for circumventing the wood-pigeon; for then, from the nature of its food, its flavour is far more delicious than at any other time. This is a migratory bird, and far less plentiful than it was, like all of its tribe. It, however, leaves us in the winter, and returns, to breed and rear its young, in the spring. Mr. Blaine speaks favourably, as, indeed, do all having experience of it, of the excellent eating it is, except when it feeds on turnips, and becomes somewhat rancid of taste. By filling its inside with bread, he says, much of this disagreeable flavour is got rid of. Moreover, he enumerates among the many virtues of the cushat, the property it has of assisting the gamekeeper in his duty. Where they exist in any quantity, he states, that the cabal they make at night when unwelcome visitors intrude into their woody haunts, prevents poachers from using their air-guns, the instruments they usually employ for the destruction of pheasants, on windy nights, when there is strong moonlight. Need we here make intercession for the turtle-dove? No sports-

man, of any age, sure, would go about to do it violence; its injury, to the youthful disciple of woodcraft, should seem as murder—

> "Murder most foul, as in the best it is;
> But this most foul, strange, and unnatural."

Let the fate of the "Ancient Mariner" warn him who would draw trigger on the bird of love; ere you fire upon the turtle, think, oh think! of him who shot the albatross!

THE WOODPIGEON.

The Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*, Linn.). Woodpigeon, or Ringdove, of British authors; the Quest, or Cushat (provincial).—This beautiful bird,

whose exterior plumage is of a bluish grey tint, shading into darker and diverse hues, like a quaker's robe, enlivened by the more mundane colours chosen by a lady of quality to set off its sobriety, is indigenous to our islands. It is remarkable for the downy softness and exquisite shading of its breast-feathers, as well as for its graceful form. It is found in wooded districts of England, in the southern and midland counties of Scotland, and in Ireland. The shyness of the bird is extreme before pairing, after which it becomes almost sociable, resorting to young plantations and shrubberies in great numbers, where it may be observed mightily busy, engaged in the different duties of incubation. As the food of woodpigeons is very various, so the depredations they commit on the green crops of the husbandman are very extensive. They delight in grain and pulse; they eat the roots of several grasses, one of which, *Potentilla anserina*, is picked up on the fallows. The turnip crop of the farmer has frequently been well nigh destroyed by them; they attack beech-masts in quantities, and reject few means of distending their capacious craws. The wild note of the cushat is the harbinger of mild weather, and forms, as it were, the indigenous melody of our groves. It is not easily domesticated, and requires infinite attention to rear. A pair in the Zoological Gardens built a nest, which happened to be destroyed; and they have been found to breed in the aviary at Knowsley; but it would possibly require the passage of generations to enable

them to forget their independence. The wing feathers of pigeons, which are very strong, cause that flapping and tumultuous noise so often heard in our forests, and so often the cause of their discovery. They are very gregarious, and retire, in large flocks, at times, to a common roosting place.

The name ringdove has been bestowed on the bird from the conspicuous marking of dullish white that intervenes, in the neck, between the rich green and purple rays of the neck and breast; the webs of these feathers are there unconnected.

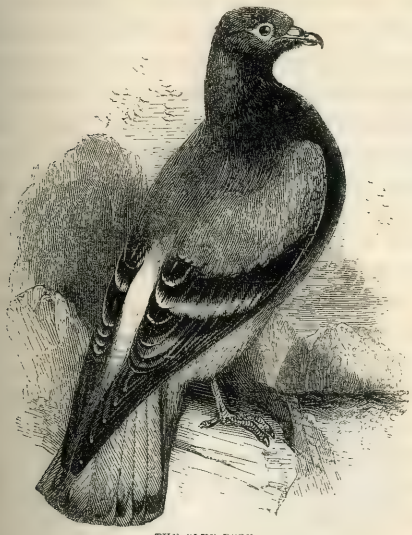
Generic character: bill of medium strength, centreiorly deflected; maxilla with a slight angle; nostrils nearly linear, widest anteriorly, and covered with a soft protuberant cartilage; tarsi short, partly feathered in front; toes entirely divided, hind toe of considerable length; wings powerful, rather pointed, second quill longest.

Types: *C. palumbus*, *troiads*, &c. Cosmopolite.

Note. Breed on trees; gregarious in winter; incessorial, but breed with facility.

The Rock-pigeon is a variety to which our ornithologists refer the domestic pigeon of our cotes. The "blue-rock" is the decoy of the pigeon-shooter of the present day. This species inhabits the hollow caves and bare rocks of the sea-shore. In the winter they feed on the grains and seeds of the region, and on the land mollusca. They are gregarious, and adhere pretty closely to the coast, where their murmuring notes may be frequently distinguished

between the dashings of the wave, and the roarings of the blast. The rock-dove is found on all the desolate shores of the north of Scotland, and the rocks and



THE BLUE ROCK.

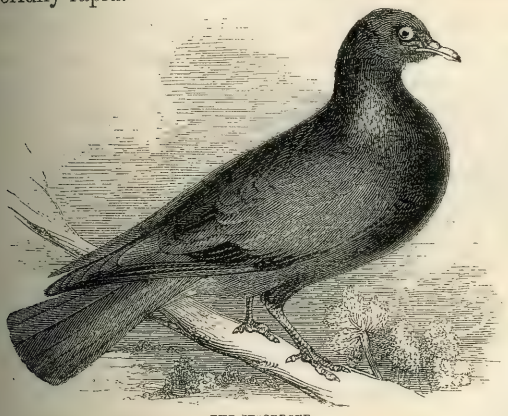
caverns of Orkney and Shetland are the breeding and roosting resorts of innumerable birds of this species. Selby mentions, that they are found in the cliffy regions of Caldy Island, in South Wales; and they are said to breed on some parts of the Devonshire and Cornwall shores.

Of the woodpigeon generally we may say, that the species has greatly decreased of late years, both

with the increase of population and the increasing persecution to which they are subjected. Not a third of the numbers, that formerly flocked our woods and forests, are now seen. But incalculable as their aggregate amount seemed to be with us some sixty years since, it is small, indeed, to that spoken of in America,—the passenger pigeon of that country darkening the air for miles, when the flocks are on the wing; and when they settle, breaking down, from their numbers, the very forests on which they rest. The Rock-dove, or White-rumped pigeon, is the staple that has supplied so much theme for the poet and the historian, as the messenger of the lover and the politician. The "Tumbler" and the "Carrier" pigeons are two of the fancy breeds of this species, remarkable for a deviation of structure from the original type. Their heads and bills are in proportion, the former shorter, and the latter longer, than in their original.

The Turtle-dove (*Turtur migratorius*). — This pigeon is smaller and more slender than the true pigeon, and its tail is not nearly so ample, but graduated. It occurs in Kent and Hertfordshire, in some of the northern counties, and in Scotland and Ireland: it appears to be more frequent in the wooded parts of Kent than elsewhere in England, but its visitation with us is altogether rare. Sir W. Jardine speaks of a specimen shot in the garden at Jardine Hall:—"The bird had frequented a break of peas, nearly ripe, for several days, and at last attracted the notice of the gardener, as one not pre-

viously known to him. When it was afterwards sought for it was discovered in the same place, rose with considerable noise, and alighted on a neighbouring tree, whence it was shot. The plumage was that of an immature bird." Thus we see it is only a straggler that occasionally exceeds the ordinary bounds of its migrations. It is, however, regular in its visits, reaching the British coast between the end of April and the commencement of May; again to depart in the latter days of August, or early in September. The fidelity of these birds is said to be as singular as the attachment of the Carrier pigeon to its native locality. The flight of the whole pigeon family is wonderfully rapid.



THE STOCKDOVE.

The Stockdove.—This species seems almost confined to some of the southern shires of England

(speaking of it only as a British bird). It is found in the open parts of Norfolk and Suffolk, where it sometimes constructs its nests in rabbit holes and burrows: elsewhere it will seek for pollards and decayed trees wherein to breed; and sometimes it is found in the entangled furze-bushes that are weather-tight. It is known to mix with the woodpigeon; it is also gregarious at the same season, and its food is alike. The young stockdove is very good eating, but not comparable to the flesh of the ringdove when it has abstained from the turnip or cabbage field. The plumage of this species is remarkable for the sort of mineral lustre of its breast feathers. In conclusion, we may remark, that the woodpigeon is distributed over our islands; that the stockdove selects the southern districts, and the rock-pigeon is most numerous towards the north.

In Jamaica, there are many varieties of this tribe: some of whom have great beauty of plumage, as the Blue pigeon and Mountain witch; and others, as the Ring-tail pigeon, extraordinary delicacy of flavour. The latter is found only in the woods of Jamaica interior, and when in season, in the autumnal months, is extremely fat, and of most exalted savour. Of the doves, too, there is one species, called the Ground dove, from its frequenting the roads and pathways for food, the size of a lark, and of most delicate plumage. We doubt, however, whether in *delicacy* of plumage any of the dove species excels our cushat, that favourite of our woods, where she threads her leafy way, or sits

crooning in loving note on the darksome tree, impervious to every eye. For *vividness* of colours the palm must, in most cases, be conceded to the smaller birds of the American woods :—

> " Just as fond Nature lovelier colours brings
> To deck the insect's than the eagle's wings."

TERRIERS.

Although his sporting claims are by no means of a prominent character, the terrier is entitled to a slight notice, at all events, seeing that he is an occasional agent of the shooter, and does him good service, indirectly, on occasion. He may be very usefully employed by those who follow rabbit shooting in cover, for his perseverance is indomitable; and, when of the rough or wiry-haired species, thorns and brambles have no account with him. The family of the terrier is the most domestic of all the canine race, and one that has lately made, and is still making, great progress in the higher branches of science known to its genus. The species called bull-terrier is capable of training to almost any purpose for which the dog is required. We have already shewn that one of that breed was of extraordinary excellence as a

THE TERRIER.

retriever; while many of the common smooth sort, that accompany the itinerant showman of our fairs, exhibit rare intelligence. As a companion to the wonderful feats related of the poodle, we offer the following instance of sagacity, or second sight, or whatever it was, in a terrier; which, should the reader say he would not have believed had he seen, we can only say we did see, and did not know whether to credit what we saw or not.

A Frenchman, who resided in the town of Oswestry, had a little black and tan terrier, that he had taught to dance (of course); to smoke a pipe; to make a low bow on the mention of Napoleon; and to cut a caper of admiration at the words, "*Jeune France.*" This animal would fetch and carry anything, anywhere. Only point to a wig that passed you in the street, and it was in your hand the next moment; and as for picking pockets, handkerchiefs seemed to jump spontaneously into his mouth. . . . . It so happened that on a market-day we were walking with the Frenchman and his dog, on the road leading to Llangollen. It was summer weather, and the dust lay very thick. We had walked about a mile out, and were returning into the town, when suddenly he stopped, and said, "At the point where we turned to come back, I dropped a franc among the dust; we will wait till *Moustache* fetches it—*Allez, Moustache, cherchez,*"—and off went the four-footed Mercury. An hour elapsed, and no *Moustache* appeared, and we grew tired of waiting; and the Frenchman, thinking he had lost his cur as well as his coin, returned disconsolate to his lodging.

The following morning we had occasion to see him early, and while in his room, there was a scratching at the door. He opened it, and, sorely travel-worn, in rushed *Moustache*, with an old leathern bag in his mouth, which, together with some bank notes and other money, *contained a franc piece.* This bag was subsequently claimed by a Welsh drover, who,

in riding to Llangollen fair, picked up a silver coin that his pony kicked out of the dust. This he had put into his bag; and it was not till long after he missed it, he remembered that, while transacting his business in the fair, a strange dog had stuck closely to his heels, and followed him to his bedroom, when he retired for the night. What occasion *Moustache* had taken for abstracting his bag, or by what necromancy of nose he knew it contained his master's money, was alike mysterious; all that ever transpired was,—that the drover had his treasure, and the reader has the tale, to deal with it according to his pleasure.

The latest fashion introduced in terriers is the variety known as the Isle of Skye breed. Its peculiarities are, eyes covered with impenetrable curtains of hair which hang over them, and a back that, if cut into quarters, would be enough for four terriers of ordinary symmetry. The direct origin of the terrier, according to Blaine (who of course follows somebody else), like that of many other well marked varieties of the dog, is involved in much obscurity. Some consider his antiquity questionable; while, on the other hand, it is not easy to mistake the dog so minutely described by Oppian, for any other than the terrier. Buffon's synopsis classes him with the hound, nor is it at all improbable that he is thus derived; and that, by frequent intermixtures and crossings, he at length exhibits all the varieties we now meet with as to size, colour, and qualities. Our friend, Colonel Hamilton Smith, places the terrier

at the head of the race of our dogs; at the same time asserting, that if there be an indigenous canine *genus* in Great Britain, it is that to which he belongs. Nor is the arrangement, of so placing the race, to be rejected, he says, because we are accustomed to consider that appellation as applicable only to mongrels. He then goes on to establish his position, by learned references to Greek words; and having done so, states, that among them—the curs—are constantly found individuals endowed with the keenest faculties and discernment. One of them, related in Montaigne's Essays — the quaint old essayist himself having witnessed the fact—was the guide of a blind man, who, when his road lay along a brook, would draw his master to the farther side from the water's edge, although it was there much more rugged and unfit to walk on. This was very intellectual, but not equal to our own sample.

CHAPTER XIII.

WOODCOCK SHOOTING.

Here is, indeed, a stirring subject—the pursuit of at once the daintiest and most sporting of all our feathered quarry. Elsewhere we shall deal, at some length, with its natural history and social details—here we confine ourselves to the most approved methods of finding and bagging this manna and fatness of the woods. These savoury strangers—the woodcocks—wherever they come from, arrive generally in the British Islands about the middle of October. They then lodge principally abroad; but the first fall of snow drives them into the woods, and in November they are to be met with in cover, whatever the nature of the weather.

In covers not too high or thick, or where rides have been cut through the well-grown timber, cock-shooting with a team of small spaniels or cockers, is the most picturesque and inspiriting of all trigger-sporting. The precaution of having markers eligibly

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WOODCOCK SHOOTING.

posted before beating a cover is begun, is very essential; for when a cock is flushed, he should never be left, if possible, while in the land of the living. The most favourite spots, both in and out of cover, with the woodcock, are clumps of hollies. There or thereabouts, you may be sure of him, if the beat has not lately been disturbed. Early in the season, however, his creeps are among the hedgerows, on the margin of ponds, in springy, marshy bottoms, and subsequently in young woods, and the skirts of plantations. At times, he is very sluggish, and will lie till the very bush he is in is struck; at other times, he is as much on the alert. Sometimes, he will not fly a hundred yards after being fired at, and will afford half-a-dozen shots, should he survive long enough; then again he is on the wing before you are half within range, and don't alight till he has put miles between himself and you. To-day he flies straight and slow, so that it is hard to miss him; to-morrow his flight is twisted like a corkscrew, and rapid as a falcon's stoop.

Colonel Hawker, who has bestowed upon this sport the name of "the foxhunting of shooting," is extremely concise in his remarks upon it. He says, indeed, that a real good sportsman feels more gratified by killing a woodcock, or even a few snipes, than bags full of game, that have been reared upon his own or neighbour's estate; but he dismisses very abruptly the means of so gratifying himself. In a country where cocks are scarce, he tells you to be sure to put a

marker in a tree, before you attempt to flush one a second time; and, when you have marked down a cock, to remember, how very apt he is to run instead of rising from the spot in which you may have seen him drop. If a cock flies away, he observes, and continues to rise wild, you may go safely beyond where he may have last dropped, and then back again to beat for him (having some one to make a noise on the side where you had before advanced on him); and he will then most likely either lie close, or fly towards you. If this will not do, take your station quietly to windward (as cocks generally fly against the wind), give a whistle when you are ready, and let the other person then draw on and flush him. His cry of "mark" will assist in frightening and driving the cock forward, and be a signal for your preparation.

Infinitely the best cock-shooting we have ever had, was in Ireland—on the coast of Donegal and Leitrim. In the neighbourhood of Ballyshannon, these counties unite, and there, in the woods of Oakfield, belonging to a connexion of our own, we have met woodcocks in flocks or "wisps," an occurrence without parallel in our sporting career. The manner of pursuing them is by two-legged beaters, a company of boys, or gossoons, as natural and naked as any four-footed cockers, and going to work with a zeal and instinct that would shame the best bred spaniels of Blenheim, or anywhere else. These "*spalpeens*" are as well broken to the sport as any crack train of dogs, and take a delight in it that shews they are to

the matter born. Indeed, a love of sport is the ruling passion of the Irish peasant—strong, even in his starvation, God help him! ..... The gossoons, having taken in hand their shillelaghs, proceed in line through the woods, giving tongue, when they flush a cock, with "Mark cock," and waiting breathlessly for the sound of his funeral oration. If no shot is fired, or, if fired, a cry of "Down dead" does not follow the report, they resume their beating, as before. In these woods, their late proprietor has shot fifty and sixty couples frequently in a day; and the late Duke of Richmond, we believe, when Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, received a pie as a present which contained twenty score of woodcocks!

We have no right to suppose our young friends will ever set up their (cocking) staff in this land of promise, and therefore it is our duty to instruct them how to hope for a supply of this their game in less densely inhabited neighbourhoods. When in places likely to hold a cock, let them towards evening try the mosses, banks of rivulets, and boggy bottoms; at that time the birds are on the "road," or feed, and consequently, are more easily met with than when laid up in the snug harbour of some old osier bed, or beneath the root of some monarch of the wood in the deepest recesses of some wide cover. When flushed, he will do well to bear in mind that the woodcock seldom, if ever, pitches on feeding ground.

The Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*).—The woodcock is the largest species in the genus *Scolopacidæ*,

or, familiarly speaking, in that family of snipes and woodcocks common to our British marshes and woodland covers. These birds are winter visitants of

THE WOODCOCK.

our coasts, and their migration is nocturnal. Upon their first arrival they are to be found in whin covers on the sea shore, or on heathy moors. When exhausted by the length of their flight, they are sometimes so little shy, that they can hardly be raised, and may be killed in great numbers, while more frequently they are timid to excess. They will, perhaps, rest a day or so in the localities we have mentioned, and then are off to settle, as it were, for the winter. They will then choose far-spreading woods, interspersed with holly, spruce, and other evergreens,

and where there is low cover to be met with near marshy and sheltered bottoms. They visit us for the most part about the end of October, and migrate again in February. Numerous instances of their breeding have been made known, season after season, in this country; but still the cases when this occurs are isolated: a pair or two, here and there, discover a favourable situation, and are found; but there is no indiscriminate breeding in chosen places, as in the case of its near neighbour, the Jack Snipe. The woodcock appears to be known in all parts of the world. We have it in most parts of Great Britain and Ireland that are suited to its existence: it is found in Orkney and Shetland for a short space of the winter. It breeds in Austria, Silesia, and even in Siberia; and its range extends beyond the Arctic Circle. They have been found in Italy and the East, at Madeira, and on the African coasts. With some varieties of plumage, they are to be met with amid the Himalayas, and in the Alpine districts of India generally, as well as at Japan.

The woodcock, when it breeds in this country, selects a dry spot, generally at a small distance from water: here dry leaves, a little fern, perchance some moss, may form its careless nest: and here the hen will lay four or five eggs of the size of those of a pigeon; in colour of a pale purple brown, or dirty yellow white, with brown markings. One writer speaks thus of nests that were found: "the soil was dry and gravelly, the grass tolerably long, without

underwood, and the trees oak, birch, and larch, not exceeding thirty years' growth." Another says: that "they are placed amongst dead grass and leaves, without any attempt at concealment." In Norway, the eggs are found merely placed on the bare ground, under brushwood, or where the young spruce fir was again springing from a space only just cleared of the old trees. The most remarkable peculiarity in the formation of the woodcock, is the structure of its bill: an adaptation to the purposes of its existence, no less curious than interesting. The upper mandible measures about three inches, and is furrowed nearly its whole length, basally compressed, and curved at the tip, which projects, and forms a kind of knob, which is very sensitive, and capable of discrimination of its food (principally worms), which it extracts from moist grounds by means of its sharp and pointed tongue. The bill is intersected by numerous veins. The eye is large, and so constructed as to catch the faintest rays of light,—a necessity, since it is a nocturnal wanderer. The digestion of woodcocks is singularly rapid, and their feeding propensities quite out of proportion with other birds: they thrust their bills, endowed, as we have seen, with a wonderful delicacy of feeling, into the soft mud of the marsh or shore, in search of the aquatic larvæ of insects and small worms; and thus they bore unceasingly during the greatest part of the night for the food, that is no sooner taken than it is in process of digestion. The woodcock measures about fourteen inches in length,

about twenty-six in breadth, and weighs from nine to eleven ounces. The plumage is coloured in all this genus with subdued and quaker-like tints. These in their turn varying from a brick-dust light brown to a sort of yellowish grey, to which last hue the forehead assimilates. Across the crown and nape there are four bars of black brown, of a rich colour, the two first the most marked; a narrow band of yellowish or reddish white separates them: on the fore part of the neck, and from the corners, there are patches of Sienna brown, of a pale colour. The wings are darkish brown, with black intermixed, and white, or pale yellow, tips, marked triangularly outside with chesnut brown, on the inner side with a sort of red brown; the outer web of the first quill is usually the palest, verging to a faint yellow, while the dark colours are the triangular spots upon it. The tail has twelve feathers; it is black, cut into with brown; the upper tips grey, the under white: a redder hue on the breast, and marked with brown of various shades in various birds. The back is an admixture of brown, yellow, and grey, with darker markings of brown and black; the whole plumage of a light sand brown effect, with shadings of grey and darker browns and black. The legs and base of the bill are pale brownish pink: at the tip of the bill it becomes nearly black. This bird suffers severely in the hard frosts of the winter, from its peculiar habits of turning over the sand and dried leaves in search of food. In this country, the number of woodcocks known to visit

us, of late seasons, is on the decline. In Ireland they are very abundant,—the boggy districts and natural copse-woods, of certain of its counties, absolutely swarming with them. There is much animal oil in woodcocks; and their time of incubation is short: the young birds run alone as soon as out of the shell. It is said, that, in common with their tribe, they are quarrelsome during the season of courtship. Blaine mentions, that the sex of the woodcock is undiscoverable from external marks; although in Pennant we find, that the hen of the woodcock "presents a narrow stripe of white along the lower part of the exterior veil of the feather, while in the cock bird, the same feather at the same part is beautifully and regularly spotted with black and reddish-white." We are not ourself a competent judge, not having a taste in feathers, but have no doubt that Blaine is right in his experience, that the distinction is not, in many birds, clearly marked. Some say the hen is the larger bird. The small, pointed feather, at the base of the bastard wing of this bird, is well known among artists as the most delicate brush used by them, especially in miniature painting. It is now greatly superseded by brushes almost as finely haired, manufactured by the brushmakers. The woodcock, on its first arrival, is usually lean and fatigued: it is often picked up, under such circumstances, in the most open thoroughfares near sea-coasts, and is so difficult to raise, at such times, that it is killed in numbers. Mr. Daniel tells us "that when the cocks first take

to the coverts, which they sometimes do in flights or numbers, they choose the year-old slopes, or they betake themselves to the edges of the woods; afterwards they lie up in ordinary, as it were, in coverts of from seven to ten years' growth."

The woodcock is often supposed to make a flight to Ireland from our shores, in seasons of severe frost, the prevailing moisture of that clime being genial to the conformation of the bird. It is well known they leave us in numbers when a long, hard frost may have prevailed. It seems to be an axiom in nature, that the voracious animal is a solitary one. The beasts of prey, for the most part, roam singly the pathless wilderness in quest of victims; the carnivorous birds, who make their eyries on the mountain-top, live and pair singly; the huge monsters of the deep, who feast on carrion, approve of no competition in blood; and thus, too, these smaller birds and animals, who are greedy, or rapid of digestion, appear averse to flocking together. This holds good of the species we are describing; and, indeed, it is a fact, that one plashy brake, such as the bird loves, will not contain more food than will support one of these birds. Colonel Montague says: "The enormous quantity these birds eat is scarcely credible: indeed, it would be the constant labour of one person to procure food (worms or the larvæ of insects) for two or three woodcocks. . . . . The difficulty of collecting a sufficiency of such precarious aliment determined us to try if bread and milk would not be

a good substitute; and we found that, by putting clean-washed worms into the mess, the bird soon acquired a taste for this new food, and will now eat a basin of bread and milk in twenty-four hours, besides the worms it can procure."

Woodcocks are seldom seen to fly in the day-time, they do not like stormy weather, and shift their quarters very much according to the climate. Thus they breed on the mountain-heights of Jura, and remain among the Alps throughout the year, visiting the moist places of the vallies according to the season: in the summer amid the hills; in the winter descending to the plains. They breed also in the mountains of Sweden, Poland, Prussia, Norway, and Lapland; indeed, everywhere that Nature teaches them their delicately nerved bills can pick from the marshes and plashes the necessary supply of food. Here they remain until the sun and the frost, alike their enemies, shall have dried up the springs and water-courses; till the ground shall have become too arid for their support; till the vermicular insects are upon the wing; or till the frost shall have congealed the earth into one solid mass, impenetrable to their bills. When this occurs, these cold-loving birds must either wing their flight to other regions, or perish.

It is said, that the arrival of the woodcock is more or less influenced by certain winds blowing from their locations: these are taken advantage of as they occur; thus sparing them that fatigue the conformation of their wings, though large, does not enable

them to support. Numbers, nevertheless, perish at sea; numbers are picked up dead on the coast; numbers alight on vessels during the passage.

Varieties occur in this bird. Dr. Latham specifies three:—"In the first, the head is of a pale red, body white, and the wings brown; the second is of a dun, or rather cream colour; and the third of a pure white." One writer describes having met with a variety, the colour of which was a fine pale ash, with frequent bars of a very delicate rufous; tail brown, tipped with white; and the bill and legs flesh colour. Mr. Daniel speaks of the different sizes of woodcocks: that those found first in the season are the largest, fly heavily, and their heads, especially the under parts, appear to be encircled with short feathers; that these large birds are not so numerous with us as a smaller size, which arrive in November and December, with shorter bills and smoother feathers. "Woodcocks that come about Candlemas," he says, "are also small, and differ in their manner of flying; are quicker of wing, take long flights, and are well known to be difficult to be shot, from their not rising above the spray, like the larger muffled woodcock, but make their way for some distance, as it were, among the boughs." Baillon mentions a grey-legged woodcock, and a blue-legged one; a pure white bird has been seen. We find, indeed, that varieties of climate among animals, of whatever class, generate, almost invariably, varieties of plumage.

Generic characters, according to Jardine: bill

lengthened and sensitive, straight (upper mandible curved, and projecting over into a knob in the woodcock), basally compressed, slightly curved at the tip, and there dilated; the tip of the maxilla fitting into that of the mandible in the whole tribe; legs and feet slim; tarsi of moderate length; *tibiæ* only for a short space naked, or altogether clothed with feathers; wings moderate, tips of the quills somewhat rounded, but the first or second longest.

Types: *Scolopax rusticola, gallinago, Sabinii*, &c. Habits of several, to a limited extent, sylvan; all migratory, or partially so; squat on the approach of danger. Breeding and winter plumage similar.

CHAPTER XIV.

SNIPE SHOOTING.

Like the woodcock, the Snipe is a migratory bird, also; visiting us in autumn, and taking its leave in spring. Like the woodcock, too, it abounds infinitely more in Ireland than England: and, indeed, in many districts of the former, is the only bird the shooter has to count upon, with the exception of the grouse and the cock. The snipe, according to the old saw, "is a good bird whenever you can get it;" but it is not correct, nevertheless, to shoot it before the grouse is in season. In August a few are met on the moors—they are always to be found in the bogs and on the upland moors of Ireland; but they are not fit to eat before November. It is stated, and truly, that these birds have retreated in this country before the march of agricultural improvement, whose *premier pas* is draining; and the sport, which forms our present subject, is to be had, in any perfection, in but very few counties in England. Moreover, the snipe is

a most capricious resident, changing his abode at almost every accident of wind or weather, or both. Sometimes not one solitary individual is to be met with in their most accustomed haunts; sometimes a sportsman falls in with a colony, where he never before knew an individual of the species to resort.

Many good game-shots contend, that shooting snipes is a "knack" (which, no doubt, they themselves have not learned); and, certainly, some eminent hands, at pheasants and partridges, give it up in disgust, and despair of ever succeeding at it. Taken in all its bearings, this sport is a very true general test of a marksman's quality. The flight of the bird is utterly altered by the state of the weather. In warm, cloudy, or boisterous days, he is as tame, and as easily covered, as a young grouse in August; the next morning, with a brisk hoar-frost, and a still, clear atmosphere, he flashes away like a bolt from a cross-bow—gyrating like a swallow in the twilight.

An old stanch pointer, familiar with the scent of the snipe, is the only dog to shoot him to with any satisfaction. This dog should be taught to retrieve also, for in some grounds which the bird likes best to frequent, it is not competent for "too, too solid flesh" to venture. "Snipes," says Captain Lacy, whom we hold in esteem as an authority on the subject of shooting birds which are not game, "snipes lie best in windy weather, when the shooter should always be down wind, as the birds, when sprung, generally face it, and thus present finer, and often cross, shots.

But in boisterous weather, though their flight be slower, it is more irregular, and, therefore, the aim is more difficult to take. Some recommend hunting up wind, and heading the dog wide at a point, instead of walking up in the usual way. But the birds rarely allow of such a liberty being taken with them, to say nothing of fresh birds being thus disturbed. With a scientific snipe dog—that is, one who, on your walking down wind, quarters his ground regularly before you, with his nose in the wind, making short turns from right to left, at thirty or forty yards on each side of you—there is no plan like walking with the wind. But with a dog not so highly accomplished, I always prefer taking the contrary direction; but then I use Eley's cartridge, No. 7."

As the flight of snipes is so rapid, and, at the same time, often so tortuous, if the shooter mean to get doublets, he must fire the first barrel extremely quick, unless, indeed, the birds lie unusually well; but, at a single bird, he can, if he please, afford himself a little more time, unless it rises wild. The critical crisis at which you should, in this latter instance, endeavour to fire, is just when the bird is reaching that distance when the shot will have the widest spread, consistent with the proper degree of closeness for pelting down a bird so small as a snipe. This will, of course, vary exceedingly according as you may use loose shot or cartridges.

The vulgar notion, that the slightest touch of shot will bring down the snipe, is wholly untrue.

It has often been seen to fly beyond sight after more than one pellet has passed through it. If you have reason to suppose you have hit your bird, and it is marked down, beat very close for it; you may very probably find it dead, though it has fled from the shot apparently as strong as ever. Try your snipe ground very patiently, and don't be afraid to beat it after noon, though you may have tried it blank in the morning: snipes often return as regularly as they leave their feeding places. Neither must you take it for granted they feed in spots apparently suited to that purpose. Constantly, haunts, the most favourable for them to the eye, do not hold a snipe; very probably there is something disagreeing with their taste, for your snipe is formed by nature for an epicure—his bill is exquisitely fashioned to give him a keen perception of flavour.

In weather when snipes rise wild, as soon as they flush, throw your eye well forward, and fire the moment they top the cover in which you raise them; observing to suit your elevation to the distance. A wild springing snipe, like a pigeon from a trap, always takes a straight course in the first of his flight. If he offers an oblique, or a cross, shot, you must regulate your aim accordingly, and shoot well forward.

The Common Snipe (*Scolopax gallinago*, Linn.).—The plumage of the common British snipe of English authors is of very sober tinting, and yet so distinctly marked as to be very beautiful. The upper ground-

colour is a dark brown black, the feathers being relieved by a lighter brown, so arranged in parts as to fall in lines. There are two broad lines, on the

THE SNIPE.

crown and over the eyes, of pale colours; while from the gape to the eye there is an uninterrupted line of blackish brown. The back of the neck is of varied and irregular colour and markings. The back, scapulars, and long tartials have feathers edged with a border of light brown, falling in lines. At the back there is much black, while the feathers are tipped with white. The breast is dark wood brown, shading into white, as they advance lower on the breast and belly. The chin is white; the throat brown. There are fourteen tail feathers; the middle two are black, largely dipped in bright yellow red,

and sometimes mottled with black; a deep and narrow band crosses the tip. The exteriors of the tail are greyish black, and a reddish orange, shaded by the dark ground colour of the feathers; the outer feather is white at the tip.

This bird is common all over Great Britain and Ireland. It breeds with us in partial numbers, and regularly; but by far the greater quantity arrive in this country with other early winter visitants, again to migrate towards the spring. Formerly, these birds were most abundant in Cambridgeshire, and would sell from fourpence each; of late years they are infinitely more plentiful towards the north; yet wherever the surface character of our counties permit their resort, there will the snipe be found. Of course, as we advance northward, among moors and marshes, we shall find them increase in plenty, even to the western isles of Scotland, and to the remotest of them. They appear to breed in every suitable locality of North Britain and Ireland. In the breeding season they locate themselves on the edges of marshy grounds; or, should these be too swampy and extensive for their purposes, they resort to the lowland moors, or to the shores of the northern lakes. The ground nest is merely a scooped-out cavity, lined with such materials as are at hand: the position, a dry tuft, on raised ground. In the southern districts, the fenny grounds of commons, or the low moist grounds in forest tracks, are selected. The young remain long after incubation, and as long as the weather permits, near their

breeding places; but, under unfavourable seasonal circumstances, they will speedily change their quarters. The frost of very severe weather, however, will sometimes keep them from removal till it is broken up again. We have known snipes where you would little calculate upon them,—in low willow grounds, among alders and scattered brushwood; and we have seen them perch close to the habitations of man, in bound up weather, in search of that moisture necessary to their existence. The loud drumming noise of the common snipe, heard in his descending flight, made by the concussion of its wings with the air, was at one time thought to come from his throat. Its pipe, as it sits among the herbage, is well known to the moor and marsh frequenter, and even to the mere woodland frequenter; for it is often popped upon in localities but little suited to its ordinary habits. Its geographical range is undetermined. Jardine says it breeds in Scona and Lapland; Mr. Yarrell, in extensive swamps and morasses in the alpine districts of Norway and Sweden; Pennant ascribes Russia and Siberia as breeding countries; and the east is given it by various authorities, while others restrict it to Europe. Jardine says, "the birds of America are distinct."

The Common Snipe is provincially called the snite, or heather-bleater. Its length is about, or near, twelve inches; the bill a good three inches: it weighs about four ounces. The snipe has many enemies; among them, the most destructive is, perhaps, the

blue hawk. This bird, in running, has a peculiar motion, or jerk, with the tail, which it outspreads at the time in a fan-like manner. Its flight is rapid, but tortuous. It is thin in August, and not then very good eating; about November it is as full and fat as the epicure can desire. It is not a shy bird, except where it congregates together, when it becomes much more wary and timid. There are often-occurring varieties of this, as well as all the other species of the feathered tribes. There is the Red-breasted Snipe (*Scolopax novaborencis*):—"In 1803, a small flock of these was seen in Devonshire." Bewick speaks of a singular field snipe, that was shot near Offord:—"Its throat, breast, back, and wings, were beautifully covered or streaked with white; and on its forehead was a star of the natural colour: it had also a ring round the neck and tail, with the tips of the wings of the same colour." We have ourselves seen an odd brick or orange legged snipe. The Red-breasted Snipe is indifferently named by British authors, the Brown Longbeak, Brown Snipe, Red-breasted Snipe, Grey Snipe, from the varieties of its winter and summer plumage: it is of the genus *Macrorhampus*, and not one of the true snipes; is known as far north as the Arctic Sea, and is specifically a native of North America.

The Great Snipe (*Scolopax major*).—In the southern districts of our island we find this snipe as an occasional bird of passage. It is of unusual occurrence both in Ireland and Scotland. Jardine men-

tions the fact, that the great snipe is nearly always met with in autumn, comparatively few being found in the spring, or on their re-migration.

This is the Great Double, or Solitary Snipe, of British authors; so named from its habits of skulking alone or in pairs. Its flight is heavy and peculiar, and its tail spread out fan-like. Its plumage is very similar to that of the common snipe, with some differences: it has sixteen tail feathers, the five outermost beautifully-marked, black bars on white, and triangular markings on belly, sides, and thighs. From the tip of the bill to the toes, it might measure rather more than fourteen inches; its weight about eight ounces; bill about four inches long. The internal structure of the great snipe is said to be remarkably similar to that of the woodcock. The bird has been not unfrequently met with in Kent, and in various parts of Lancashire. Its most usual breeding continental range appears to be Norway and Sweden, and in Holland more rarely.

Jardine specifies, that in comparison with the common snipe, "the bill and legs are short; the *tibiæ* bare for only a short distance above the tarsal joint." Bewick mentions three specimens of a large snipe, but which could not clearly be ascertained as "a distinct species, or whether it acquires its bulk and change of plumage from age, and its solitary habits from ceasing to breed."

There is a species of snipe, infinitely more rare than the solitary heather-bleater; it appears an

intermediary between that and the woodcock. The known specimens of this bird in England are few in number: one was procured from Queen's County, Ireland, where it was shot; and another was killed in the neighbourhood of Morpeth, in Northumberland. As we have not ourself examined these specimens, or others, in the Zoological Museum, it will be more satisfactory to the reader to introduce that eminent naturalist, Sir W. Jardine's description of this species:—"*Scolopax Sabinii:* Sabine's Snipe"—first premising that its call is described as differing from that of other snipes, and its habits said to be similar. An Irish specimen, produced by Mr. Thompson, was shot at thrice; without exhibiting fear or shyness, it alighted, after being fired at, but a short distance from the same spot—"The upper parts are nearly of a dusky brown, varied by narrow bands of pale yellowish brown; the under parts are also rufous dusky brown, alternately barred with pale yellow brown. The tail, containing twelve feathers, has the basal half black, the terminal half chesnut brown, barred with black or blackish brown. Tibiæ plumed entirely to the knees. The entire length of the bird is from ten to twelve inches, of which the bill will measure from two to three."

SHOOTING THE JACK SNIPE.

This little specimen of his species, like his great type, the Solitary Snipe, is much more easily shot than the common. It lies closer, flies slower, and presents a much easier mark. Still, inanimate, as it undoubtedly is, as a general rule, the Jack Snipe,

THE JACK SNIPE.

like the woodcock, after affording, perhaps, half a dozen shots, as if he were but half awake, will take to his wings, and make use of them in good earnest. Moreover, in windy weather he is as wild as the common snipe is tame. When you have flushed, and marked him down, you must take care he does not

rise secretly, take a second flight, or a long run, and afterwards get up behind you. The Jack comes to us later, and leaves earlier, than the common snipe, and has rarely been known to breed in this country. Though a short flier, he knows how to take care of himself, and will often set the best dogs and men at defiance.

The Jack Snipe (*Scolopax gallinula*): Linn.—This is the pet of the snipe genus, both for its plumage and its flesh. As to the latter, let people say what they will of the ortolan, we will back the jack, half-snipe, or judcock, for a tit-bit, against any ortolan in the world. It does not flock together like the common snipe, but chooses in pairs, or singly, its low woodland or marshy abode. If the jack comes to us rather later than the larger snipe, it remains with us longer than others, always staying through March, when its feathers are approaching towards their full beauty. At this time, indeed, it is far the handsomest in dress of any species of the bird, either known in Great Britain or foreign: its glossy back so richly dyed in purples and greens, its delicately distinct markings of wood brown, and the clearest ochreous yellow, and the pure white underneath, which so charmingly contrast these brighter hues, its green grey legs, and dusky bill, and its plump but elegant form, combining to render it one of our prettiest visitants. When five or six are seen together, they look like animated gems or jewels, as they rise from covert,—their wings quivering in rapid,

whizzing motion, and glistening with brightness. Although these birds lie close enough, they are far from being shy, but will remain, at times protruding their heads and bills from the ground, as children hide their faces in the mother's lap, when they think to conceal themselves. It is very uncertain whether they breed in these islands, even in solitary instances, for all attempts to find the nest have hitherto signally failed. The bird has been shot during summer, and this is the only datum for the supposition that they do so. Sir W. Jardine says, "In an excursion to Sutherlandshire, some years since, we thought we had found a breeding station for this bird near Tongue. The gamekeeper there, an intelligent man, said, that he frequently met with them, and their young, in August, while shooting; and every cross-questioning that could be put, would not allow him to think that he was mistaken by the young of the common snipe. He mentioned the breeding-places frequented by them, and which, when visited, were exactly the spots we should have expected, or looked for a 'jack.' Our search, however, was fruitless; and, so far as this point is concerned, we have been unable to fill it up in Scotland."

The "gid," "jetcock," or "judcock," as it is termed provincially, weighs about two ounces; is from seven and a-half to eight and a-half inches long; bill, nearly two inches; the tail cruciform, and consists of twelve feathers, lance-like in shape; the wings are greyish black, secondaries tipped with white, the

coverts edged with white, and shot with ochreous, the under parts white; the flanks tinted with a grey black and brown; the feet and legs greenish; and patches, or broad bars, of rich blackish brown about the head, an ochreous yellow separating them. The eggs of the jack snipe are the size of a lark's; its haunts the same as those of the common snipe. Its geographical range seems to be the mountainous parts of Europe during the process of incubation, and it is a winter visitant in France and central countries. Temminck says, that it breeds in the neighbourhood of Petersburg. Some writers have considered it identical with the Indian species found in the Dukheen. Fermin describes, in his "History of Surinam," a bird he calls the jack snipe, "as seen by thousands on the sea-shore; that it must be a bad marksman who does not kill sixty at once with fine shot; and that he killed eighty-five at a single discharge; that the flesh is excellent, but the bird so small, that he could eat twenty at a meal." From all we know of this bird, it would never be found congregating in numbers according with this description. Blaine says, Fermin has probably mistaken the ox-birds, which fly in vast flocks, for this sportsman's and epicure's delight. This is the *Becassine Sourde* of French writers.

THE NEWFOUNDLAND DOG.

Having now brought to a termination our notices of those birds which come properly under the denomination of game, as also our outlines of the natural history and characteristic properties of the dogs used in their pursuit, we will proceed to the second portion of our work; prefacing it, and closing the first part with a brief sketch of an animal, not absolutely connected with either, but whose eminent sagacity, and peculiar aptitude for the service of man, render him a most useful agent, both to the game and the wild-fowl shooter.

Of all dogs, take him in the aggregate, the Newfoundland (*Canis terræ novæ*) is, perhaps, the most generally sagacious. We have found him, beyond others of the *sub genus canis*, gentle, teachable, and useful. It is our opinion, that, in most cases, he might be made the most valuable of sporting dogs,—his intelligence, or instinct, if such, indeed, it merely be, appearing to be called into action in a greater variety of instances than in any other dog, except the original mountain, or shepherd, dog. As a retriever, he possesses a quality of unquestionable value,—that of mouthing his game without breaking it; and, as we have before said, he may be brought into the field with pointers, without interfering with their province. As a watch-dog, his fidelity is proverbial. We, ourselves, possessed a dog of this species,

SPANIEL AND NEWFOUNDLAND DOGS.

that, upon a night attack of burglars, broke his chain, scoured through a long yard, in which he was kept, and, taking an enormous leap upwards, caught hold of a fellow by

the tail of his coat, who was entering the window of a conservatory on the first floor, and brought down the flaps between his teeth. Nor did this trophy content him; for utterly disdaining a bit of poisoned meat thrown at him, he pointed and yelped at the thief, till the alarm was given and the fellow discovered. The same dog permitted a robin, through a whole winter, to take shelter in his den. It was a most singular spectacle to witness; for so much familiarity, and, as it seemed, affection, grew up between them, that, while Robin hopped and chirped about between his shaggy paws, or upon his head and body, our Newfoundland would stand or lie perfectly still, his small, brown eyes winking and blinking, and his well-clothed tail gently wagging to and fro with satisfaction. A feat of this dog deserves commemoration. A boy, belonging to the house, had not returned home at the usual hour, to the great alarm of his mother. The dog above mentioned, seeming to share in the general disturbance, followed the servant, sent in one direction, to seek out the truant; but soon distanced and lost sight of him, and was the first to discover the boy's apparel on the water's edge, and, a few minutes after, the boy himself *in* the river, who was then sinking. The noble animal plunged in, and rescued the child, who, it appeared, had run off with his elder brother's corks, and, being of a determined and independent character, had ventured to swim by himself. At the moment of time of the dog's approach, he had got embarrassed and en-

tangled in his machinery, and must certainly have been drowned but for this timely assistance.

The fine animal, now so common in Britain, is usually a cross between the original Newfoundland or Labrador dog, and others of the canine race; and is, therefore, found somewhat diversified, both in form and colour. Jardine says, that the hound seems to have crossed in with the present breed; for, even in Newfoundland, some of these dogs are, in size and fulness of body, superior even to the Irish greyhound, although the latter is higher in the shoulder. He speaks of one, that when desired to show himself, would place his fore-paws on the lintels of any door. These large dogs are usually white in colour, with black spots, while the original breed is smaller, and totally black, except portions of the tail and legs; their muzzle is sharper, the forehead more arched, and their expression wilder; their bodies, too, are usually more slim; and the black colour of the head is interrupted by the rust-coloured patches between the nose and the eye. The Labrador dogs are almost semi-palmated, and seem to be as familiar with the water as an otter, —swimming, and diving, and keeping in it, with astonishing facility. He is very large, rougher-haired than the Newfoundland, and carries his tail high. At St. John's, a dog is reckoned to maintain his master during the winter, drawing sledges, fish, wood, and so forth; in the summer, they are left, in great numbers, to maintain themselves, and, consequently, not only suffer great privation, but contract various diseases.

This species of dog, although he may be deemed inferior to the shepherd dog in steadiness and stubbornness of adherence to watching, holds the highest place for intellectual qualities. We know of one whose usual station was the open hall-door of a gentleman's country mansion; who appeared to think his peculiar usefulness consisted in guarding the solitary pedestrians of the family. He would view, unmoved, the exit of every party; but a lady, a child, or his master, at all times brought him to his feet, and sent him scampering over the forest or park, by way of pioneer, although but a second returned, perhaps, from a day's hard work in the woods. So remarkably was this dog affected by individuals, that in despite of his antipathy to beggars, by twos and threes, he was never known to bark at a woman-beggar, but would solicit the attention of his master to her case, in a variety of ways, and always attend her to the lodge-gates on departure. A small, common white owl was the pet of the children; it used to roost, the day long, under a dark bush, where the trees overhead formed an almost impenetrable shade. Our Newfoundland had a particular dislike to the species, but always took great notice of this little creature, who would fasten her big, brown, round eyes upon him with great perturbation; but he knew perfectly well it was not to be molested, and, on the contrary, would lead the youngest child, who could just run alone, by his gambols, to the dark bush. In Youatt's "Humanity of Brutes," he tells us thus:—"A vessel was

driven on the beach of Lydd, in Kent: the surf was rolling furiously; eight poor fellows were crying loudly for help, but not a boat could be got off to their assistance. At length a gentleman came on the beach, accompanied by his Newfoundland dog. He directed the attention of the animal to the vessel, and put a short stick to his mouth. The intelligent and courageous fellow at once understood his meaning, and sprang into the sea, and fought his way through the waves. He could not, however, get close enough to the vessel to deliver that with which he was charged; but the crew joyfully made fast a rope to another piece of wood, and threw it towards him. He saw the whole business in an instant; he dropped his own piece, and immediately seized that which had been cast to him, and then, with a degree of strength and determination almost incredible, he dragged it through the surf, and delivered it to his master. A line of communication was thus formed, and every man on board was rescued from a watery grave."

In truth, the instances of courage and benevolence recorded of this species, are so numerous, that they would fill a volume. We may speak of the cleverness of the French poodle, who has been made an excellent actor; as in the case of the company of poodles brought to London, about fifty years ago, by a Frenchman, that had been educated to play their parts in pantomimic sieges; counterfeit admirably fine ladies and gentlemen; and dance minuets, bow, and look demure and frisky, according to book.

We may remember M. Leonard's pointers, Brague and Philax, who could certainly understand language, and play at dominoes; and commend Walter Scott's dog, Dandie, who found his boot-jack; and James Hogg's dog, Hector, who overreached his master; and marvel at the poodle who would never permit a false note in singing to pass unobserved by a howl and a growl; or the shoe-black's mongrel, who brought customers to his master, by dirtying the boots of the passengers who passed the door of the shop;—but we must still assert, that, in benevolence and sagacity, the dog of the Newfoundland species is superior to any other. A gentleman put a marked shilling under a stone by the roadside, first shewing it to his Newfoundland dog. The gentleman then, with his friend, rode forward three miles; and then the dog received his signal from the master to return back for the shilling. The dog turned back: the gentlemen rode home; but, to their disappointment and surprise, the hitherto faithful messenger did not return during the day. It appeared he had gone to the spot where the shilling was deposited; but the stone being too large for his strength to remove, he had stayed howling at the place, till two horsemen riding by, and attracted by his seeming distress, stopped to look at him; when one of them alighting, removed the stone, and seeing the shilling, put it into his pocket, not conceiving it to be the object of the dog's search. The dog followed their horses for twenty miles, remained undisturbed in the room where they supped, followed

the chambermaid into the bedchamber, and secreted himself under one of the beds. The possessor of the shilling hung his trowsers upon a nail by the bedside; but, when both travellers were asleep, the dog took them in his mouth, and, leaping out of the window, left open on account of the sultry heat, reached his master's home with his prize; when, from memoranda in the pocket, everything but the shilling was enabled to be returned to the owner, and the singular circumstance elucidated.

This anecdote very strongly resembles that before related of the Frenchman's terrier. For this story, we do not personally vouch: the terrier's feat came actually under our own observation.

The Newfoundland Dog (*Canis terræ novæ*), differs from the Esquimaux race in many respects; having greater freedom of joint and muscle, being longer in the back, of a more flowing and straighter fur, a thicker muzzle, and more pendent ears. The St. John's breed is preferred by sportsmen, as being the more intelligent, with remarkable powers of scent, and teachable to an almost unlimited extent. The fact of the superiority of the Newfoundland is, we presume, to be traced to their vicinity to the capital of the state; everything animate being found more intelligent and sagacious within a reasonable distance of a metropolis. Blaine mentions, that, some years ago, these dogs could be readily procured at Poole; and, when well broken, were very valuable: that some gentlemen who purchased them, found them so

capable of general instruction, that they have given up most other sporting varieties, and contented themselves with these; and, indeed, found the places of the others perfectly well filled up. This he supposes to occur, however, principally in fenny and aquatic districts. He speaks of a valuable dog of this sort, the property of a gentleman who resided near Newhaven:—"Whenever it was likely wild-fowl would come in shore, and that, consequently, gunners would go along the levels to intercept them, then she was sure to be found, waiting for and attending on them as long as they stayed; fetching, either out of the sea or the river, spite of ice or snow, any that were shot. She had been known to stay two entire days and nights, and, as was supposed, without food, waiting at the shore-side to assist any shooting parties that might go out; for, at the time we allude to, an intense frost of two or three weeks, had frozen up every river and stream. Here, indeed, was self-devotion; and she truly had a sporting mania."

Colonel Hawker recommends the purchasers of these dogs to buy them ready broken; as, by the time they are trained (by the process of half-starving), the chances are that they will have got over the distemper, a disease particularly virulent in the Newfoundland kind. He also gives us a hint, of which our own experience has proved the wisdom, never to use violent means to make him do what you want, which will generate sulkiness; "but to *deter* him *from* any fault, you may rate and beat him. . . . .

The St. John's breed of these dogs, is chiefly used on their native coast by fishermen: their sense of smelling is scarcely to be credited." They will scent a wounded pheasant through a whole covert of game, or a pinioned wild-fowl through a furze brake, or warren of rabbits.

It will, therefore, be seen that we have not placed the biography of this remarkable dog out of place. To the game-shooter, he is capable of rendering the most essential services; some of the very best retrievers we have known having directly descended from him;—indeed, a friend of ours had a pure Newfoundland bitch, which was perfect at the business. For this reason, we have associated, as will be seen, with this Newfoundland race, the Pheasant Spaniel, or Springer, as the alpha and omega of that sport. No wild-fowl shooter—none of the hardy race of sportsmen, who go down to the sea in punts, and occupy themselves in the dreadful trade of navigating canoes in search of water-fowl—should ever be without one of these amphibious friends at his side.

CHAPTER XV.

BIRDS WHICH ARE NOT "GAME."

ALTHOUGH mention has been made of the quail and the bustard, among the game birds of the British islands, neither of them, in fact, belong to that class. Still the quail, when it is found, is so constantly met with among partridges, that it seemed most convenient to associate its history with theirs; and as the bustard is now rarely seen at all, it appeared immaterial where its reminiscences might be given. In strict sporting classification, indeed, several others, set down in the list of game birds, do not belong to that tribe; but as they were necessary to preserve the seasonable routine of shooting, we thought it best to preserve the chronology of our sport, rather than the technical order of the quarry. Acting still further upon that principle, we purpose now treating of those land and fen birds, not being game, that are sought after by sportsmen; and concluding with wild-fowl shooting, as well on the coasts as on inland waters, —the latter, as followed on the Highland lochs,

one of the most exciting winter sports to be had in Great Britain.

Foremost among fen birds stands the Bittern,—a frequenter of lonesome places and wild regions, whose race seems fast wearing away, as far as relates to these islands. His chief abode now is in the bogs and mountain swamps of Ireland. To find him is the difficult point for the shooter; when met with, he is, generally, an easy prey. His flight is heavy and slow, save when very suddenly flushed, when he will soar perpendicularly, and with considerable rapidity. When shooting with a double gun, on raising a bittern which thus towers, we would recommend one barrel being given to him on the instant; the second may be sent after him when he has begun to gyrate. If you bring down a bittern, and he is only winged, or slightly hit, bear in mind, that he is at such times very dangerous to approach: you will, therefore, take such precautions to destroy it as may least injure its plumage; for we count upon your intention to preserve it, stuffed, as a memorial of no very common exploit.

SHOOTING THE HERON.

As the days of hawking are now over—or, at least, on their very last legs—it may be lawful to draw trigger upon this bird; a practice long, among sports-

men, "more honoured in the breach than in the observance." The keen angler and strict preserver of water will, indeed, make no bones about knocking a heron on the head whenever he has the opportunity—for he is a sad poacher of the scaly family; and, like poachers in general, he is wary to a proverb: perhaps there is no bird that flies or swims more difficult to get near, on the land. In passing from the heronry to their fishing quarters, herons fly altogether beyond range of shot; and, as far as our experience of their habits went, during a faithful observance of them in one of the greatest heronries in Suffolk, to circumvent them at home is out of the question. To contrive even the chance of a shot, the only method seems to be to wait for them—of course in ambush—in the twilight, or when there is a moon abroad, near the waters which they frequent for the purpose of feeding. The sportsman will conceal himself under a bank, or in some close shade ashore; or, hiding in his punt under some high bank, he may float down with the stream (close to the lee shore) till he comes upon them. Hitting them, from their size, is, of course, not difficult; and when hit, they are generally done for, as they will carry very little shot. It will be well to remember, the heron, when only wounded, makes a very fierce and dangerous resistance. It is said that the best plan to out-general him is to teaze him for some time, with a stick, or a ramrod, and after he has seized hold of it with his bill, to watch an opportunity of putting a foot on his neck, and

then either to despatch him outright, or if he be merely winged, and it is desired to bring him home alive, to tie his bill and legs, and cover up his head with a handkerchief.

Herons are to be met with constantly on the coasts, and in those situations they are more readily approached. They resort to small ponds, and where the banks are steep, are come upon before they can see the shooter.

THE BITTERN.

The Common Bittern (*Butor Stellaris, Ardea Stellaris*). This fen-bird is of singular habits, active

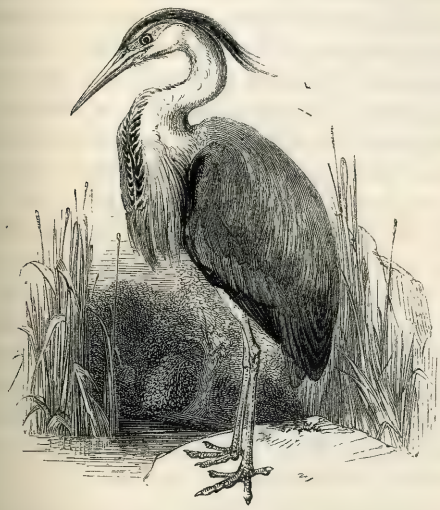
during the night, and at rest in its marshy coverts during the day. Mornings, evenings, and twilight, are the periods at which its ill-famed cry is heard booming afar at regular intervals, like the warning gun of the sentinel, the hoot of the screech-owl, or the bellowings, as some have it, of the wild bull. At these times he is flying across the swamps in search of his food; but it does not appear accurately known whether this peculiar and solemnly mournful call be a general appeal to his species, or whether it be merely incident, or antecedent to the period of incubation. In days of old, when the bittern was a frequent bird of our islands, and its flesh esteemed a choice delicacy of the epicure's table, the cry of the night raven (as the common people were wont to call it, indiscriminately with the true night heron or mire drum) was deemed significant of death, a comet, or an earthquake. In the fens and marshes, indeed, its favourite resorts, nothing can well sound more solemnly ominous of evil than its hollow and direful call. It appears late in autumn, or in winter, in very varying and unequal numbers. In one year it is tolerably plentiful; in another there shall be found few specimens of the species. Bitterns were unusually plentiful in the winter of 1830-31, both in England and in South Scotland.

This bird has been known to breed in our marshes. Its ground nest is made on the very edges of marshy swamps, amid the reeds and rushes. A few leaves of water-plants, and some dry rushes, will serve to line

the cavity. It lays from seven to eight eggs, of an ash-green colour. It lives upon frogs, aquatic reptiles, and vegetables. Though it claims affinity of form with the heron, in many respects it is its exact opposite. It is not so voracious; it is fleshy, instead of lean and consumptive-looking; and its brood, instead of being fed by the mother for many days, are in three days led out to supply themselves. The young of the heron are very unsightly creatures, all legs and neck, while the bittern's brood have a comfortable look shortly after breaking the shell. Jardine surmises that the food of the common bittern is seized by watching, after the manner of the true heron, and that fish and aquatic reptiles are its seasonal food. He says, a land rail has been found in this bird's stomach. The general appearance of its plumage is that of a predominant brown-yellow, with brown or black patches, or markings, fine shadings of green and purple at the sides and neck.

The Little Bittern (*Ardeola Minuta*). This bird is also occasionally found, and supposed to breed in this country. In form it is somewhat analagous to the small egret tribe. Its particular resorts are marshes, the shores of rivers, and water brush wood districts. Its nests are made on the ground, and its habits are skulking, stalking with the head drawn closely in, so as to conceal the neck. These birds have been killed as far north as Orkney, and also in Ireland, although not often. The plumage is very rich; blackly glazed, with green about the head and

neck, and yellow and brown tints, dotted with darker ones at the sides and flanks. The Latins named the bittern, *stellaris*, or the "star-reaching," while the Greeks, taking its character from its more constant habits, have given it the title of the *okios*, or the "lazy."



THE HERON.

The Common Heron (*Ardea Cinerea*).—When heron hawking was a favourite sport of the British nobility, great pains were taken for the preservation of the species. The heavy penalty of ten shillings was enforced upon every person who destroyed its eggs; twenty shillings upon him that killed the bird

The plume of the heron was a chivalric badge; the flesh of the heron was sent to table. The fat of the heron, made into a paste with other ingredients, was the favourite bait of those versed in the mysteries of angling. It is a shy bird, but gregarious during the breeding season. Its great beauty has made it a choice ornament of park and forest; although its natural abode lies in districts, broken by vast pools and marshes. In such situations, and during that large portion of the year in which it is a wading, terrestrial bird, its attitudes are natural and graceful. Its dark purple and bluish grey plumage, beautifully intermingled with white and light shades; its plumed crest; its outstretched neck; the bright-gamboge-yellow irides, and deep yellow bill; the two broad tufts of lengthened black feathers, that relieve the pure white of the breast at the centre; and its size, which will exceed three feet,—render it a striking object, as it is seen, now elevating, now depressing, its crest, its long legs midway in the water, voraciously feeding upon, and indiscriminately attacking, every tribe of fish within its capacity.

An old writer thus describes its rapacious maw:—"I have seen a heron that had been shot, that had seventeen carp in his belly at once, which he will digest in six or seven hours, and then to fishing again. I have seen a carp taken out of a heron's belly nine inches and a half long. Several gentlemen, who kept tame herons, to try what quantity one of them would eat in a day, have put several smaller

roach and dace in a tub; and they have found him eat fifty in a day, one day with another. In this manner, a single heron will destroy fifteen thousand carp in six months." The heron takes his prey either wading in the water, or hovering over it in shallow places. With that bird's-eye accuracy of his species, he penetrates the element with his visual organ, and darts down upon his prey with unerring certainty; his long neck a second under water, and the next rising on the wing, the eel or trout yet alive in his bill, he flies to the shore, quickly to dispatch it, and again returning to the waters for more. It has been said, that he destroys more fish in a week than an otter in three months. In the winter season, however, he fares but ill; for the fish have retreated into the deep waters, and even aquatic reptiles, water rats, or mice, are scarce. At such times, his indolent patience seems to serve him instead of food; and he will even take up with the sea-weeds or lake reeds of his locality.

In forests, its long wings and legs give it an awkward and constrained appearance. Perched on branches of trees, or flying along, its legs and claws outstretched, its ungainly attitudes might sometimes excite risibility. The heron builds its nest on tops of the highest trees, or on cliffs that overhang the sea-shore. In cultivated districts, it will select the oldest timber to build upon: generally, in despite, as it were, of its timidity, it chooses situations close to a thoroughfare. The nests are made of sticks, and

lined with wool; and, in building, herons flock together. Sometimes they choose a solitary glen, by the side of a loch or mountain stream; and sometimes, it is said, though not avouched, they will breed upon the ground. Their laziness, produced by their habits of overgorging, is so excessive, that they will not be at the trouble of building a nest, if they happen to find one ready made for their purpose. These birds inhabit Great Britain and Ireland. They are said to be plentiful in Orkney and Shetland; indeed, they are generally spread over our islands. Where this bird is preserved in a heronry, it has been known to do incalculable mischief to the freshly-stocked fish-ponds of domains. Willoughby thus quaintly describes a method for ensnaring them:—"Having first discovered the haunt of the heron, get three or four small roach, or dace; and having provided a strong hook, with a wire to it, this is drawn just within-side the skin of the fish, beginning without-side the gills, and running it to the tail; by which the fish will not be killed, but continue for four or five days alive. Then, having a strong line, made of silk and wire, about two yards and a-half long, it is tied to a stone at one end, the fish with the hook being suffered to swim about at the other. This being properly disposed in shallow water, the heron will seize upon the fish, to its own destruction." We cannot but here close our notices with an extract from Christopher North's sublimities. His love of sport is expressed too enthusiastically not to interest the young, that are addicted to

pastimes pursued on "flood, field," and fell:—"Slow-sailing heron, that, cloud-like, seekest thy nest on yonder mass of pines; to us thy flight seems the very symbol of a long, lone, life of peace! As thou foldest thy wide wings on the topmost bough, beneath thee tower the unregarded ruins, where many generations sleep! Onwards thou floatest, like a dream; nor changest thy gradually-descending course for the eagle, that, far above thy line of travel, comes rushing unwearied, from his prey, in distant isles of the sea." And, again, where he speaks of the pastimes of Craig Hall:—"Hush! stoop—kneel—crawl; for, by all our hopes of mercy, a heron—a heron! An eel dangling across his bill! And now the water-serpent has disappeared! From morning dawn hath the fowl been fishing here—perhaps on that very stone; for it is one of those days, when eels are a-roaming in the shallows, and the heron knows that they are as likely to pass by that stone as any other—from morning dawn, and 't is now past meridian. Be propitious, oh, ye Fates! and never—never—shall he again fold his wings on the edge of his gaping nest, on the trees that overtop the only tower left of the castle. Another eel! And we, too, can crawl silent as the sinuous serpent. Flash! Bang! over he goes, dead!—no, not dead; but how unlike that unavailing flapping, as head over heels he goes spinning over the tarn, to the serene unsettling of himself from sod or stone, when, his hunger sated, and his craw filled with fish for his far-off brood, he used

to lift his blue bulk into the air, and, with long-depending legs, at first floated away like a wearied thing, but soon, as his plumes felt the current of air homewards flowing, urged swifter and swifter his easy course,—laggard and lazy no more, leaving leagues behind him, ere you had shifted your motion in watching his cloud-like career, soon invisible among the woods." "Into the silent twilight of many a wild rock-and-river scene, beautiful and bewildering as the fairy work of sleep, will he find himself brought, who knows where to seek the heron in all his solitary haunts. Often, when the moors are storm-swept, and the heron's bill would be baffled by the waves of tarn and loch, he sails away from his swinging-tree, and through some open glade dipping down to the secluded stream, alights within the calm chasm, and folds his wings in the breezeless air. A better day, a better hour, a better minute, for fishing, could not have been chosen by Mr. Heron, who is already swallowing a par. Another—and another!—but something falls from the rock into the water; and suspicious, though unalarmed, he leisurely addresses himself to a short flight up the channel, round that tower-like cliff, standing strangely by itself, with a crest of self-sown flowering shrubs. Thou believest thyself to be alone, for the otter, thou knowest, loves not such very rocky rivers; and fish, with bitten shoulder, seldom lies here—that epicure's tasted prey!"

CHAPTER XVI.

SHOOTING THE KNOT, THE LAND AND WATER RAILS, THE GODWIT, THE GOLDEN PLOVER, THE GREY PLOVER, AND THE LAPWING.

THE first of these little birds is a fen bird; and, in in point of rank and ancient name, the most distinguished. He is said to derive his name from King Canute, or "Knoute," whose palate he suited so exactly, that the monarch was never happy but when he was devouring one. The Knot is more generally netted than shot; though, when the fens are frozen, it repairs to the sea-side, where the coast-shooters often bag a whole flock at one discharge. Where, however, the young gunner has an opportunity of meeting it in any tolerable plenty, he will find it afford him excellent practice.

THE LAND RAIL.

In searching after the Land Rail (or Corn Crake, of many districts)—which, indeed, is about as profit-

able as looking for a needle in a hay-stack—go, if go you will, into clover-fields, and bean and potato pieces. The young meadows in Ireland are vociferous with them; but, of all the feathered family, they are the most impossible to deal with. To do it with even the shadow of a chance, take into the range you purpose beating two or three close-working, steady spaniels, and be always in the centre of them. Never forget the rail always keeps moving; therefore, whenever and wherever he gets up—should he ever rise—incontinently blaze away, taking the most remote possibility of overtaking him with a single pellet. The only excuse a sportsman can offer himself for being found looking after rails is, that a shot in hay-harvest time is worth something, for the purpose of keeping the hand in.

THE WATER RAIL.

As this bird is really an amphibious ortolan, the epicure will not begrudge the trouble of bringing one —to table. A patient shot will bag one, perhaps, in twelve hours—but that only by remembering to press him without an instant's interval, should he happen to be found. As the creature, however, is very poorly supplied with the resources of safety, no doubt nature has given it discretion, which is the best preservative from danger. If the water rail has taken refuge in a hedge or cover, go in advance of your dogs, which it will most probably be watching, and

flush it yourself. Of course, always fire at it, when within sight. A good water spaniel is indispensable in shooting the water rail.

THE GODWIT.

The Godwit is another fen bird, but found, during their winter shooting, by the fowlers of our coasts. Here it is met with singly; but in the northern regions of America, it goes in flocks of great numbers, as many as seventy-two having been killed at one shot by a Mr. Atkinson, a resident at Hudson's Bay. It is also a *bonne bouche*, as rare to our bills of fare as its savoury compatriot, the knot. As the chances of falling in with this bird are "few and far between," the sportsman, who has the luck to meet it, must take such advantage of his good fortune as circumstances make most advisable.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER.

Among *gourmands*, the Golden Plover ranks next to the woodcock—some esteem them equally; therefore it is good to shoot this feathered beau on all occasions, seeing that he is especial delicate eating. It is resident among us all the year round, and resorts chiefly to the most secluded marshes and water-meadows, keeping more than a gun-shot, generally, clear of all danger, or places of ambush for the

sportsman. Colonel Hawker says, golden plovers were formerly killed in great numbers by means of stalking-horses. We never saw the contrivance put in practice, but bear testimony to the truth of the second plan he mentions:—"If you fire at these birds, as they fly over you, they will dart down for a moment, and spread in every direction: so that, by taking a random shot with your first barrel, you may often bring down the birds to a fair one for your second." Golden plovers may be looked for in all places where their favourite food, worms, are likely to be found.

THE GREY PLOVER.

Ireland seems the chosen land of the Grey Plover, which is there met with in strong flocks; but almost invariably associated with the Lapwing, or Green Plover, the most wary sentinel that ever bore feathers. The most probable method of bagging this bird is to wait till he is on the wing. This he commences by towering at first in close order, and then descending, and sweeping, within a few feet of the ground, in circles and gyrations. It is when engaged in these manœuvres he is most readily shot.

THE LAPWING.

According to the French proverb, "he who has not eaten the Lapwing, does not know what game

is." This may be all very true, for there is no standard of taste; for our part, we think there is more virtue in the thigh of a woodcock, and the bosom of a hen-pheasant, than in a whole wilderness of peewits. "Old peewits," says Colonel Hawker, a great authority in feathered amphibia, "fly round a dog, in order to mislead him." With a dog, therefore, one may be able to kill several of these birds in the marshes, which they frequent. The afternoon is the best time, as peewits prefer the uplands during the morning. This is the plover whose eggs are so popular.

THE KNOT

The Knot (*Tringa Canutus*, Linn.).—This is the second bird in rank of the species *Tringa*, or Maritime Sandpipers; the most beautiful and abundant

of which, along our coasts, is the Purre, or Dunlin, or Stint, of British authors.

The Knot, or Red and Ash-coloured Sandpiper, does not, as far as is known, breed in England; nor is it so regular an attendant upon our maritime coasts as the beautiful purre: but at times it visits us in great numbers. The seasons for its accustomed appearance are autumn and winter. Its summer and winter plumage, of respective red and ashy hues, has assisted in its various nomenclature; and its primeval estimation as a tit-bit for the palate of our northern invader and conqueror, Canute, procured for it its present familiar name of knot, as before stated. It is a fen bird, frequenting saline marshes, where it follows the retiring tides, and delighting in the soft, oozy mud of such localities, where it feeds almost regardless of danger, although, at times shy and diffident of approach. Knots stay on our shores sufficiently long to change their summer dress. The tops of the rocks, in the different bays and estuaries in Scotland and Ireland, are sometimes, at fullest tide, covered with them. Here they will sit, and rest the live-long day, or until the waves recede sufficiently for them to pursue their search for food. Jardine says, he procured many specimens of them in Holy Island, on the coast of Northumberland, with stones merely; as they will, shortly after their migration, allow themselves to be approached within the distance of a few yards. He also states, "that the nests are placed under, or by the side of, some

tuft or bush of grass, or herbage: often ingeniously concealed, but exhibiting little workmanship, except a little hollowing and pressing of the dried grass to the bottom." The entire length of these birds is about seven inches and a half; their breasts are fat and fleshy, and where they pick up abundance of food, they become an edible almost as appetising as the reeve.

After incubation, we find the plumage of a prevalent reddish orange; the sides of the head are slightly spotted with a brownish black, while the crown and back of the head have the feathers broadly streaked with the same tints. The middle of the back, scapulars, and long tertials are of a dark brown, save where broadly margined with a buff orange colour, or irregularly notched with yellow white. The under parts are pure white, with small dark markings in centre; the quills dark brown, paler on the inside; the shafts white and broad. The tail is brown, tinted with green and brown.

Generic characters of *Tringæ*: bill of the same length, or slightly longer than the head, often gently curved, soft and pliable; wings rather long, sharp pointed, the first quill longest; tarsi and feet of middle length; toes slightly joined at the base, and narrowly fringed on the edges with a membrane; hallux small, articulated on the tarsus. Types: *T. Canutus*, *variabilis*, *maritima*, &c. Gregarious in winter. Cosmopolite.

As we have said, the Purre, or Dunlin, is the most

numerous, as well as the most beautiful species of the maritime sandpipers. It is distributed along almost all our sea-coasts, from north to south. In winter, the birds congregate in almost innumerable packs, on the shores and estuaries, where they follow the tide, in their feeding parties, with great assiduity. They have the most picturesque effect possible, thus crowded together, after, or before, their repasts, either perching on the rocks, or inactively strewing the beach. They are from seven to eight inches long. Wherever, in Scotland, or our own country, the sea forms estuaries, or the country is studded with lochs, there be sure, this beautifully-coated little creature may be seen in flocks, in its gayest attire, hunting for the softest food. Provincially, the ox-bird, or stint.

The Land Rail, or Corn Crake (*Rallus Crex:* Linn.).—We cannot write of the land rail, before dinner, without a certain exudation from the palate. This fat little bird must not be confounded with the water rail: besides that its bill is much shorter, it is much more timorous—indeed, so much so as to be almost invisible but to the most persevering pointer and sportsman; and it is made so strong in the lower limbs, by the length of the leg, shank, and toes, that its rapidity of motion appears next to miraculous. What need of wings at all to a creature, considering its proportions, with such an enormous capacity of stretch. Talk of seven-league boots, indeed! You must drop the simile, and think

of the railroad car. It is named corn crake, from its noise, or call, "Creke, creke, creke,"—which may be heard "now here, now there, now everywhere, and

THE LAND RAIL.

now nowhere;" and wherefore? Simply, that the bird is an uneducated ventriloquist, and deceives you into the belief, that he is at any spot the farthest from the actual one. In many respects, its habits are similar to those of the water rail; for though the first seeks the thick grass meadows, and moist and sheltered vales, yet are its preferences chiefly aquatic, —taking to osier-beds, young grass, or grain in moist places, and low-lying districts, before any others. Here he will choose his position, uttering his "creke" from a clod of earth, and you shall be running on one side and the other, and ever so far away after his

call, which possesses all the modulations of distance. The nest is made as carelessly as the partridge's, with some soft, dry leaves, or grass; there it lays from ten to twelve eggs. Moss is sometimes introduced into the architecture of the nest; and some natural hollow of the ground is always selected. Its eggs are of a dull white; its food, in summer, insects, worms, and slugs. Jardine once took a mouse from the stomach of a corn crake. This bird will sometimes dive and swim in a singular manner. We have read of a Mr. Jervis, who possessed a young bird of this species, that was immoderately fond of the water. It would dart to the bottom, and swim, and splash about, with the superabundant activity of a creature unused to any other element. The corn crake is found generally all over the British islands, but we wish it were in more plenty. It extends north to Shetland and Orkney. It has, however, almost disappeared in several localities where it was frequent. In the south of Scotland, ten years ago, it was plentiful; it is now very rare in the same vales. The "creke" is only uttered during the season of incubation. We give Jardine's description of the feathers and generic characters:—"Over the eyes, behind the auriculars, and extending beyond the neck, is a streak of grey, blending into the colours on either side; on the crown, back of the upper parts and tertials, the ground colour, or centre, of the feathers, is hair brown, each being very broadly edged with yellow-ochre brown, or a yellow tint of oil green; the wing

coverts, and axillary feathers, orange brown; the quills a dull, reddish hair brown, darkest on the inner webs; the region of the eyes, auriculars, and sides of the neck, are reddish wood brown, shaded into the throat and breast,—the former of which is white, tinted with grey, the latter yellowish brown; the centre of the belly is nearly white, shading gradually to the sides and flanks, which are embellished with a red orange, barred with hair brown, pink towards the base; legs and feet yellowish brown. This bird migrates to Madeira and to Africa. Its varieties are the Spotted Crake, or Spotted Gallinule, which is also a summer visiter to the British shores: the Little Crake, which is called Baillon's Crake, or Gallinule, of British authors; the upper parts of which are delicately and most beautifully spotted with pure white. This has been taken as far north as Derbyshire."

The last crake we have to enumerate, is the Little Crake, spoken of above by Jardine (*Gallinula minuta*). This bird is of plainer plumage than the rest of the family, but in nidification and habits it is very similar.

Generic characters of *Crex:* bill short, strong at the base; culmen entering the plumage of the forehead, its outline slightly deflected to the tip; maxilla angulated; nasal fossa broad; nostrils pierced in the membrane; wings, at the carpal angle, armed with a knob, or rudimentary spine, rather short, concave, second or third quills longest; legs strong, naked for

a short space above the tarsal joint: anterior toes long, slender, cleft to the base; hallux short, articuculated nearly on the plane of the others. Types: *C. pratensis*, *porrana*, *gularis*, &c. Cosmopolite. Habits, skulking; chiefly aquatic; breed on the ground; lay numerous eggs; noisy, and often nocturnal.

THE WATER RAIL.

The Water Rail of British authors.—This is a bird of skulking habits, that inhabits or frequents flat and oozy levels, fens, and marshes. It is of the family *Rallidæ*, the most aquatic of the Grallatores. It is abundant neither in our own country, nor in Scotland: perhaps, however, it will be more correct to say, that the shy and wary habits of the bird render its haunts little pervious to the perseverance

of man. Its powers of flight are very limited, for its wings are short and concave, and ill-adapted for rapidity of motion; thus, instead of trusting to this mode of safety, it conceals itself amid the thick-matted vegetation of a low-lying country. To compensate for its awkward and fluttering flight, we find it has been given a structure of feet and legs admirably adapted for swiftness; while the shape of its bill, head, and form is slender, to enable it, with facility, to pierce through the maze of aquatic plants and grasses of its localities.

Specimens of the water rail are often procured in the winter; when it is driven, by the severity of the season, to haunts nearer the reach of man, into some cavity, or covered place, where it is sometimes even taken by the hand. Sir W. Jardine mentions, that, in his own vicinity, the bird will be met with, in winter, in the wet ditches that do not easily freeze; where, no doubt, it can still procure food. The same naturalist thus describes an adult male, shot in his neighbourhood. The accuracy of Jardine's specifications makes them especially valuable to young naturalists:—

"This male bird has the crown and all the upper parts yellowish brown, tinted with oil green, the centre of each feather black; on the centre of the back occupying nearly the whole feather, but on the lower part and scapulars being in the centre only, and there on the wings and tail, allowing the pale colour to be the prevailing one; quills nearly clove brown;

on the forehead, until beyond the line of the eyes, the shafts of each feather are strong, and protrude in a horny point; the chin greyish white; the region of the eyes, cheeks, sides of the neck, and under parts, until in a line with the legs, bluish grey; the flanks black, barred with white; tips of the feathers reddish wood brown, forming a line of that colour along the centre of the vent, joining with the under tail coverts, which are similar, their basal half being black, which sometimes appears mixed with them; axillary feathers barred with black and white; the bill is blackish brown at the tip, at the base tile red, becoming brighter and orange red upon the edges of the gape; legs greenish brown. White varieties sometimes occur."

Rallus aquaticus.—Generic characters are: long, compressed, and slender bills; nasal furrow long and wide; liney nostrils, pierced near the middle of the length; rounded, short, and concave wings, the third and fourth quills of which are longest; carpal angle often armed with a spine; legs of medium length, bare above the tarsal joint; long and slender feet, toes cleft to the base; hallux short, articulated near the plane of the others. Type: *R. aquaticus*, &c. Cosmopolite. Habits, aquatic; skulking; cry, of a ventriloquist power; lay numerous eggs; perch on rails, fences, or low trunks of trees; feathers of the forehead, with the shafts, prolonged into horny points.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa melanura; Scolopax limosa*, Linn.). This is a handsome bird, breeding

in the English fens, and delighting in oozy marshes and moist low grounds, common to our coasts and the Scottish; it is also known in Ireland. In the breeding season, the plumage of the godwit is very fine, being red, of different shades, varying from dusky to orange. The head, neck, and breasts are usually of the paler tints, faintest at the eyes and throat; each feather of the crown being marked lengthwise with a brown black; the breast and sides are also marked irregularly with black, the flank bars being wide and distinct. There is a great deal of white underneath, but barred and marked with dusky brown. The ground upper colour is of a fine, black, glossy brown, with a purple hue, and crossed by bars of pale orange-coloured brown. The rump and tail coverts are white, and the rest of the tail black, of a rich hue: the extremity of the tail slightly diverges into forks when shut. The quills of the wings are a deep greyish black on the outer webs and edges, graduating to white inside; the shafts of all orange-white. The bill is orange, shading into black-brown at the extremity; the legs and feet are greenish grey. In winter, the chaster hues predominate. The whole has a tea-green and black effect; but the plumage is really greenish brown, darker along the centres, the black and white of the tail pretty much the same as its summer dress. Intermediate to these periods there are many variations of hue. The eye is large and full. The geographical range of the godwit is extensive: in the summer, as far as Greenland; in

the winter, it is known in Africa, in the Japan Islands, and many other parts. In exterior form it resembles the heron and several of the crane kind, from the length of its bill, neck, and legs, and its unfeathered joints, which, Jardine remarks, "remove it from the more squat or lowly figure of the plovers and true *Tringæ*." It was formerly held in high estimation as a table delicacy; and, well fattened, is not now altogether despised. The godwit seldom skulks in sheltered places, its whole structure appearing adapted to an aquatic life in the open marshes and coasts; being, like most of the crane kind, very clamorous and noisy; and in this, as well as in the harder construction of the bill, unlike the true snipe. We give, as the most correct of all naturalists, the generic character of the godwit from Sir W. Jardine: "Bill very long, strong at the base, compressed, bending upwards; mandible smooth, rounded, slightly dilated at the tip, projecting beyond the maxilla; wings long, quills with the shafts very strong, flattened, first longest; legs long; tibiæ naked for the greater part of their length; outer toes connected by a membrane more than half the length of the basal joint; hind toe articulated on the tarsus."

Habits maritime, gregarious in winter, clamorous in breeding season. Europe, Asia, America. Types: *L. melanura*, *rufa*, *&c. &c.*

The Common or Red Godwit (*Limosa rufa*). Grey Godwit. Common or Red Godwit of British authors. Red-breasted Snipe.

This is a variety of the black-tailed godwit, more generally abundant than it, and yet far from common. Colonel Montague describes the red godwit as larger than the last species, weighing about twelve ounces, and measuring about eighteen inches. It appears

THE GODWIT.

early in August, and remains with us through the winter. It is more noisy than the former species; and the peculiar shrillness of its cry, as it flies, uttering a sort of *whelp, whelp*, betrays it at once. It chooses a locality close to the shore or beach, where it can make use of its long bill in the soft sand or mud. Here it congregates in small parties; and here it associates with many of the other birds to whom its habits or form bear affiinity. It is most known northward in our islands, and is said

to be a punctual attendant of autumn in the sister kingdom. The plumage changes from the rufous of the summer tintings, to the grey of the winter hues. Sir W. Jardine relates, that "he has never missed parties of them in the end of August and in September, mingling with others of the *Totani* and *Tringæ* which are considered of less common occurrence on the border." He is speaking of the river Merse (at Skinburnness), and banks of the Wimpoole on the Solway. He also mentions the "low shores between Holy Island and the Northumbrian coast," as a frequent locality for these birds. Their habits are greatly similar to those of the black-tailed species. The general range of the bird is not considered so extensive as the last-mentioned variety, being chiefly confined to some portions of Europe not so far north, a few frequenting portions of India and its islands. It has a larger bill, with longer legs, than the black-tailed species. For the rest, its manner of raising food, breeding, &c., is the same as that of the black godwit.

The Common Lapwing (*Vanellus cristatus; Tringa vanellus*, Linn.). The common Green or Crested Lapwing of British authors (provincial). Bastard Plover.—This may be termed the head of the plover family, and is the most noble in appearance; its brightly varied and pencilled plumage, and its interesting habits, combining to make it a great favourite with every ornithologist. This bird breeds inland; but, as may be seen from the structure of its feet,

has an affinity with the *Tringæ* and *Totani* tribes, and its habits are, therefore, partly maritime. It also, like these, changes its seasonal plumage; it is, however, larger in size, and though distinguished (in one or two species) by its graceful and adorning crest, its affinities are almost all plover-like.

THE GREEN PLOVER.

The whole of the British empire may boast the possession of the Peewit; yet is it far from being the numerous family it was once in our country. Agriculture has greatly trended on its resorts, and localities once echoing with the clamorous cry of the parent birds, and absolutely thronged with their lively plumage, are now but thinly scattered over with their lessened numbers. The lapwing likes wet and boggy pastures, low moist meadows, fenny

grounds, and sub-alpine moors. Wherever these are situated, either on the shore or inland, may be found the haunt of the peewits. They congregate at first early in the spring, then separate into pairs as they proceed to breed. At the season of incubation the inland moors are covered with them, huddling and tumbling about in their anxiety to deter the wayfarer from approaching their nests, and performing the while those beautiful evolutions of flight for which the tribe is remarkable, and which exhibit to such advantage the peculiar beauty, variety, and glossiness of the lapwings' feather tints, as they are seen by myriads dancing and darting to and fro in the summer sunsets. They chiefly feed nocturnally, or at dusk. Plovers' eggs so named, are those of the peewit; and the young birds' flesh is by no means to be despised as a table delicacy. The nests of this bird are found by dogs trained for the purpose; their instinct of scent is made use of, and they will point as at game till the eggs are taken. In the full plumage of the peewit, the crown, &c., is black, finely glossed with purple; the feathers, springing from the occiput in a waving plume or crest, are narrow, long, and black, curving gracefully upwards, and to be raised at will erect; round the throat a yellow white is encircled, a sort of oval patch on either side below the eye is pure white; the nape of neck is pale brown, beyond the most glossy black and purple; the back and wings a splendid olive green, having rainbow reflections of deeper tints of blue and steel colour, and

beautifully variegated, while the belly is white; the wings are steel-blue, or ash with white and chestnut red in parts; the tail short, black, with white at extremity; legs a dusky purple red; the young have a little more yellow in the tinting; the colours of the female are slightly subdued.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER.

The Golden Plover (*Squatarola pluvialis; Charadrius pluvialis*, Linn.).—The presence or want of a hind toe seems to have decided our naturalists upon their generic distribution of the plover family. There are two species of plover so called, the Great

Plover (also entitled Stone Curlew and Norfolk Plover, also the Grey), and the Golden Plover; the last of which, as being the most interesting of the family, we take as the head of the list, although the smallest of the species. It is scarcely above ten inches long, and its weight is no more than from seven to eight ounces. This bird is common in Britain on sedgy islands where there are few or no inhabitants, where they can strew the ground with their nests, and, as it were, claim its inherent possession. It occurs abundantly on our coasts in winter, and, contrary to the habits of the grey species, is seen in vast flocks. It is thus known far and wide among the sub-alpine moorlands of Scotland, the sedgy moors of Ireland, and in our own country in every suitable locality. In such resorts, when

> "The wheeling plover ceased
> Her plaint, 't was silence all."

Nothing can well be more noisy than this family Let an intruder but approach the brood, and off she flies, wailing and whelping out her singular cry, in very advance of the enemy; then, after convincing herself of the absence of danger, she will whisk away through the sylvan coverts loved by the cushat, ere she again returns to her young. The breeding plumage begins to change as soon as the bird settles in her location; the nest is made with great carelessness, and lined very indifferently with mere grasses or materials close at hand. The nest is a mere

ground cavity, or scratched hollow. Towards autumn the young grown birds descend in flocks to the fallows, or wet meadows; and towards winter they are again on the coasts, and become excessively shy. Just before that period they are killed in great numbers, while describing those flight-circles which bring them so near to the gun of the sportsman. They resort greatly to Orkney and Shetland.

Nothing can be more pleasing to the eye than the summer plumage of this beautiful bird; the deep, soft, rich velvety black about its head and throat, the white and yellow immediately contrasting with that hue on the sides and under tail coverts; the fine, pale brown of the back and other parts; the forehead streak of white; the shot purple glossings of its neck, and the triangles of yellow on each feather; marking their contrast on this part from the nape of the neck, where the feathers are dark in the centres, and broadly edged with gold colour; and so on through the whole brightly tintly plumage. The winter dress, though not very dissimilar, brings more ash colour and grey to the feathers, and a paler yellow; while the intermediate hues between winter and summer are always richly varied. The bill is black; the legs grey: the female differs in the distinctness and depth of the colours. Sir W. Jardine specifies, that the correct limits of the species have not been ascertained, and that the Arctic and American birds are specifically distinct. He is inclined to believe that the foreign golden plover is the *C. Virginianus*, a smaller

bird; but he possesses specimens from America, as it is said, agreeing with our bird in every particular. This is the *Pluvier doré* of French authors.

The third species of the true plover is a foreign one,—the *C. pluvialis* and *Virginianus;* a most beautiful creature, according to the specimens we have seen of it.

The Grey Plover (*Squatarola cinerea. Tringa squatarola*, Linn.). The Grey or Bustard Plover of British authors.—This bird is at least twelve inches long, and twenty-four broad; its weight rather more than that of the golden plover. We have no reason to conclude it to be a summer visitant in England; but in other parts of the year, and after the breeding season, it is often found assembled together in small packs, although never in the same flocks as the more abundant kind, the beautiful golden plover. Thus, we see it on our north-eastern coasts, in the Fern Islands, in the south, and generally on the borders of Scotland. Its geographical range is greatly more extensive. According to different authors, we may place it in the Feroe Islands, Iceland, and Northern Europe, as a summer and winter guest. Dr. Fleming believes that it breeds in Algoa Bay, Egypt, Japan, and Java, and on the highest Kincardine hills. Selby has seen, in June, some birds on the Fern Islands. The poulterers' shops, in London, exhibit them early in the season: but, in the latter case, they may have already put on their nuptial attire; in the former, some few birds may have been wounded, and unable to migrate.

The winter dress of the grey kind is brown, of different shades, in each feather marked angularly with grey, ash, or whitish yellow; while the summer plumage contains a great deal of the richest black, and the underneath parts much interspersed with white, such as the vent, tail-coverts, thighs, &c. The upper portions of back, scapulars, &c., finely variegated in browns, each feather edged with white. Upper tail white, barred with brown part of the distance; central feathers coming to a point, axillary feathers black.

The plover shares in the quarrelsome nature of the ruff, and other birds of similar habits; but in an inferior degree. As soon as the brood leaves the egg, the parent bird leads them about; for as they are thickly covered with down, they require less care than birds of the poultry kind.

The generic characters of the *Squatarola* are thus described by the accurate pen of Jardine:—"Bill rather strong, tumid, flattened on the culmen; cylindrical towards the tip, which is hard; nasal groove wide, more than half the length of the bill; nostrils linear, pierced in the nasal membrane; wings long, pointed, first quill longest; legs rather short, bare for a short space only above the tarsal joint; toes connected by a small basal membrane, slightly fringed on their edges; hallux rudimentary, or wanting. Types: *S. linarea pluvianus. Virginianus.* Cosmopolite. Breed inland; gregarious, except during incubation: undergo a seasonal change"

The bird described by Blaine and others as the Great Plover, is the Common Thick-knee (*Œdicnemus crepitans*); a diminutive variety of which is mentioned by Bewick and White under the name of the Long-legged Plover, whose alliance to the bustard family is demon-

THE LONG-LEGGED PLOVER.

strated as well by its length of legs, as its resorting to the same open and extensive plains as the latter, and depositing not more than two eggs at a time. One of its names being the Norfolk Plover, it is scarcely needful to state, that it is found in that county rather

abundantly, and in many other of the eastern and southern shires, as well as in Lincolnshire, but not far north. It is found in Ireland, as also is the true plover; the latter in the greatest abundance.

This bird, also indifferently termed Stone Curlew, is of nocturnal habits,—the large, round, prominent ball of the eye, proving its capacity for night prowling. It breeds occasionally in the fallows, makes a nest in shingly hollows, on the bare ground, and picks up its food somewhat promiscuously from the ground, the water, and the marsh,—worms, reptiles, and even small mammalia. It is a finely marked bird, of rich greenish brown and yellow, with white and cream yellows underneath; base of bill bright yellow, extremity black; legs very long, and greenish yellow; pure white under the throat; under quills of wings with much white; round the bare space of the eyes bright yellow.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHOOTING THE DOTTEREL, THE RUFF AND REEVE, THE GREBE, THE CURLEW, THE COOT, THE OXBIRD, THE REDWING, THE FIELDFARE, AND THE LARK.

THE DOTTEREL.

This is one of the few British birds with which fable has been busy. It is taken, runs the story, by means of an unhappy propensity—that of mimicking the spectator, be his attitude what it may; and thus it remains till the net of the fowler is thrown over it. At present it is shot as its congeners are; and this is not a difficult matter when it can be met with. The chief resorts of the dotterel are the fens of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire.

THE RUFF AND REEVE.

These eccentrics are natives of our fens, but partially confining themselves to the districts of Cam-

bridgeshire, and thence northward. So soon as they see a Reeve, the Ruffs begin to fight; and desperate little fellows they are. "The sporting history of these birds," Blaine tells us, "was formerly a very interesting subject, and collected together numbers of gentry: some to watch their habits, some to shoot them, more to see them netted, and many more to eat them" (by all accounts, the best fun of any). Their price was somewhere about two guineas a dozen—by Apicius costly feeding? but that was after they had been stuffed with milk, hempseed, boiled wheat, sugar, and all sorts of dainties. Shooting them is very dull sport; they flush lazily, and a tailor might bring them down with his goose.

THE GREBE.

This is a scion of the diver family, and ducks more adroitly than any of his seed or generation. It seems to anticipate the flash of a gun; so that shooting at them will be conceived a nice operation. The large grebes Colonel Hawker thinks worth shooting for sake of their skins, "which make excellent tippets and travelling caps."

THE CURLEW.

The true system of shooting this bird, is always to have a second gun in reserve—if double, so much the better; because, if you wing him, he makes a great disturbance, and brings all his mates about you. You will get much nearer them than you did to the indi-

vidual you wounded. In working up to curlews, contrive to keep close to the land, and well under cover of it.

THE COOT.

As this bird is not worth having when dead, it will not be required that we give instructions for shooting it. His chief value is on ponds, where he is very attractive to all kinds of wild fowl. The reason is said to be, that he acts as a centinel while the other birds sleep—their custom in mid-day.

THE OXBIRD.

The Oxbirds frequent many of the coasts of England in perfect clouds at certain seasons of the winter, so to speak, particularly during white frosts. In August, when it is stormy, they are very tame, not at all taking offence if you kill a dozen or so of their company. These, the gallant colonel already quoted says, are no doubt young birds. This is capital sport for a schoolboy, he adds; because, if one or two are "stopped," the rest are sure to pitch down with or near them, as thick as they can possibly stow together. Then is your time, oh ingenuous youth! "have at the brown of 'em."

THE REDWING.

This bird only comes among us in winter; and, unless the weather be hard, he is a particularly shy guest. When a flock of redwings alight, they have

their regular scouts posted; and, without great care, getting near the main body is out of the question.

THE FIELDFARE.

Fieldfares also arrive as heralds of foul weather, and are rather more accessible than the redwing. They are to be shot both singly, among copses and in hedgerows, and also in flocks on the ground, where they pitch to feed on the grain shed during the harvest. They feed also in meadows, and, like the domestic thrush and blackbird, on almost all kinds of berries.

THE LARK.

This least of the tribes that come under the shooter's notice, in snow and severe weather assembling in vast flocks, and now and then affords him a large return for his powder and shot. With a long gun and lots of dust shot, he shall put a dish upon his table that will enable him to understand the value the luxurious Romans set upon singing birds. The larks of our South Downs are very pretty imitations of the Theban *becca ficos*.

The Dotterel.—The genus *Charadrius*, while presenting some generic similarities of plumage with the plover family, differs in its maritime habits, shorter structure, and in that it has no spotted markings of feathers.

The Dotterel Plover of British authors (*Charadrius marinellus*) is a breeding visitant of Great Bri-

tain. It is rare in Ireland, nor have we near so many of these birds on the mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland that we formerly could boast. However, there they still breed, as also in parts of

THE DOTTEREL.

Scotland. We extract from a careful observer of these birds, Mr. Heysham of Carlisle, the pith of an interesting account of their habits. He says, they congregate in their various resorts about the middle or end of May, where they remain together some days, and then retreat to the mountains to breed; always in the vicinity of the lakes; choosing the more inaccessible summits, and those, in especial, covered with the "woolly frieze moss," *Trichostomum lanuginosum*. In these high places they make no nests, but choose

a well-covered ground cavity, where it is sheltered by some rocky fragment.

The hills of Scotland are also favourite resorts of the dotterel. Although it is known with us in some numbers as a spring and summer visitant, we know nothing of its winter quarters. It lays three eggs, and feeds upon insects, and lucky the mortal of epicurean gusto who sees before him a dish of these dotterel. A propos of the bird as a table delicacy, and in conjunction with our remark that its winter habits are unknown, and its migration never noticed, we give Captain Lacy's spicy anecdote:—"The *sudden* departure of the *dotterel* tribe, alike remarkable for rarity, beauty of plumage, and excellent flavour, may sometimes be most satisfactorily accounted for, without the interposition of a Yarrell or a Waterton. Some years ago, a friend of mine had the good fortune to fall in with a small 'trip' of these birds, of which he secured two couples, and sent them as a present to his Grace the Archbishop of York, from whom he received that urbane reply for which his grace is so remarkable. At the period of their arrival at Bishopthorpe, his grace was from home, but sent strict orders for them to be kept in their feathers,—the dotterel being a bird whose plumage he had never seen. It so happened that his grace was then about to hold an ordination, and, therefore, resolved that these choice *morçeaux* should appear at his table on the occasion. The candidates were numerous, and among them was one who had been educated at

St. Bees, where, it is said, the vernacular and the polish differ a shade or two from those same at Oxford. At table it fell to St. Bees' lot to sit opposite these two couple of dots, and as a stiff examination under Wrangham was never known to improve the appetite for dinner, St. Bees did not feel disposed to *peck*. At length, however, a savoury exhalation, from the well frothed up *quartet*, having assailed his olfactories, he commenced operations in good earnest. Very shortly afterwards a gentleman on his right, with a look but few could have misinterpreted, politely invited St. Bees to partake of the dish he was carving. "No, no!" replied our new made Aurora Borealis, as he *forked* the *fourth* dotterel on his plate, "no, thank ye, I'll stick to t'little burds!"

Dotterel occasionally visit Tees Bay, and rather more frequently the shores of the Humber. Their note is a piping whistle. They are excessively cautious, and fond of their young in the manner of the lapwing: meeting the intruder, which, if a dog, they will flutter before, like the partridge, feigning to be lame, and returning by that sweeping circling flight common to their tribe.

The Ringed Dotterel (*Charadrius iliaticula*, Linn.).—Ringed Plover, or Dotterel, or Sea Lark of British authors.

This chiefly maritime bird may, by good luck, be found by the sportsman on the sandy and gravelly shores of our islands. It resides the whole year in our climates; and is a lively little creature, with

plumage, remarkably shaded, of chaste and delicate tintings. It deposits its eggs among the shingles in some naturally-formed cavity, out of the reach of the tide. The food of this bird, it may be seen, is thus always within reach at the recess of the waves.

THE RINGED DOTTEREL.

The whistle of dotterel is a shrill and sad note; that, being almost incessant, betrays their presence long before they are seen. Indeed, their sober plumage so harmonizes with rock and stone, sea, and sky, and sea-weed, by which they are surrounded, that it is difficult to distinguish the animate from the inanimate portions of the creation. In such situations they pursue an active and bustling career, either at work pursuing their food, or sitting perched on the rocks, or squatting on the coast in innumerable quan-

tities. Although, however, we mention their maritime resorts, as the most usual stations of these birds, they are, by no means, their only ones. Along the shores of rivers they are occasionally found to breed; choosing the loose pebbly ground for that purpose, or the sand-beds of the water-courses. They often occur inland—ten, fifteen, or twenty miles distance from the sea-coasts; more especially in several of the eastern counties of England. Like the common dotterel, they often exhibit extreme fear at the approach of strangers, using every bird-like artifice to relieve their broods from the unwelcome intruder. Their eggs are few, of a greenish ash colour. We subjoin a description of the plumage of this noisy, numerous, and pretty class of the genus *Charadrius*. The chief peculiarity is a chin and collar of pure white encircling the neck, followed by one of black, passing into the brown of the upper parts of the plumage. The lower parts are a clean white; some portions of the wings are grey brown; others, clove brown; and tips of quills and secondaries white; the tail brown, with a clouded band; the bill yellow, with a black tip; the legs yellow. We have remarked many slight varieties of tintings, especially during the gayer season of incubation.

The Little Ringed Dotterel (*Charadrius minor*). The Little Ringed Plover of British authors.

Mr. Yarrell describes this rare bird as an occasional guest in our island, although we cannot but deem it is often shot without remark. Jardine says:

"As a British bird, this interesting species rests on a single specimen procured by Mr. Henry Doubleday; it was taken at Shoreham, in Sussex. The habits of this dotterel become interesting to the ornithologist, as being somewhat at variance with the others, frequenting the banks of rivers in preference to the coast; but, like the others, it lays its eggs upon the sand, without any attempt at a nest. From the very young state of Mr. Doubleday's specimen, it is conjectured that it may have been bred in England, and, if so, we may yet find the species as an occasional visitant; though, perhaps, the character of the banks of the rivers is not such as will suit its habits."

Charadrius Cantianus.—The Kentish Dotterel, or Plover of British authors.

This species is closely linked with our ringed dotterel, and distinguished only by its inferior bulk, and by its feathered markings. Its habits appear to be the same with the larger dotterel, and it associates with it when thrown into the same localities. It breeds with us; is known in Sussex, Kent, Norfolk, Essex, in the marshy districts, and on the sandy and gravel beaches of the coasts. Its geographical range is somewhat extensive, although not common over Europe, and not known, that we are aware, either in Scotland or Ireland. In the plumage of this bird the collar round its neck is interrupted; there is a great deal of yellow brown in the plumage; the back and wings are hair brown; shafts of feathers deeper in tint; the crown yellow brown; nape the same; and

much white about the wings and tail; while German specimens of this bird have been marked with a less yellow brown, black bill, legs black also. Its manner of running along the sands or shingles, with its head drawn down close on the shoulders, is very peculiar; but is similar to that of the sanderling.

THE RUFF.

The Ruff and Reeve (*Machetes pugnax*, Cuvier).

This little bird, surnamed the Fighter, takes after the *Grallatores*, both in pugnacity, and the remarkable natural wattle and exuberant plumage of its throat and neck.

These birds are found in England in the fenny districts, where they breed; and are met with, in the spring and autumn, in other parts of Britain; about the end of August most frequently in Scotland, in

the mosses and salt marshes, as stragglers passing onwards to the moors. On the Frith of Forth, on the Northumberland coast, and on the shores of the Solway, they are occasionally frequent. The vast numbers that formerly thronged our own country are no more to be seen. Population, and the necessity of

THE RLEVE.

drained civilised abodes, have compelled this singular tribe to forsake their olden haunts; and it is to be feared the time will come when the ruff shall be but a tradition of our sportsmen, and an adornment of our museums. A writer of the last century thus describes their amount in some islands surrounded with sedgy moors, where men seldom resort:—"I have often seen the ground so strewed with eggs and nests (ruffs and plovers) that one could scarce take a step without treading upon one of them." The males

lose their sexual appendage when the breeding season is over. The ruff and the reeve are taken in nets about thirty or forty yards in length. In the Isle of Ely and the Lincolnshire fens they were formerly prodigiously abundant. They would arrive about the end of April, and continue till the latter days of August. These nets are supported by sticks, "at an angle of forty-five degrees," placed upon dry grounds, or very low watered ones, not far from reeds. Here the fowler conceals himself, and the birds are enticed by stale or stuffed birds to come under the nets. As soon as he perceives the success of his artifice, he pulls a string, they are enclosed; and often godwits, grebes, knots, and plovers, share the fate of the ruff and reeve. The mode of fattening the latter for the table is by stuffing with boiled wheat, hemp-seed, sugar, or bread and milk. During the process they are kept in a dark room, where the very acmé of their fatness is to be observed, or they are apt to fall away in a day or two. If ever so little light is let into their dark prisons, these little creatures immediately do battle with each other; nor will they leave off while life is left. "*This* died for love, and *that* for glory," may the disconsolate fattener say, as he picks up the dead bodies, and retires with the slain.

Colonel Montague thus describes their combats in a wild state:—"In the spring the ruffs *hill*, as it is termed, that is, they assemble upon a rising spot of ground, contiguous to where the species prepare to deposit their eggs; then they take their stand at a

small distance from each other, and contend for the females. This hill, or place of resort for love and battle, is sought for by the fowler, who, from habit, discovers it by the birds having trodden the turf somewhat bare; though not in a circle, as usually described."

We had occasion to remark, that although the pugnacious disposition of the ruff never ceased in confinement, it increased with the growth of the long feathers of the neck in spring, when the least movement of either from their usual stand, provoked a battle. Their actions in fighting are similar to those of the game-cock,—the head is lowered, and the bill is held in a horizontal direction; the ruff, indeed every feather, more or less distended; the former sweeping the ground as a shield, to defend the more tender parts, the auricles erected, and the tail partly spread; upon the whole, assuming a most ferocious aspect. When either could obtain a firm hold with the bill, a leap succeeded, accompanied with a stroke of the wing, but they rarely injured each other.

Where gregariously assembled among other species, the ruff is known by the greater length of the legs. The breeding plumage is scarcely ever similar in any two of these birds. Reddish oranges and yellow whites, clove brown and black, deeply shaded in glossy purple, are the chief tintings of their beautiful and varying plumage; for the rest, too well known by the fen sportsman to be specifically described. They are from nine to eleven inches high

when erect. The reeve is often of more rufous tints, with more black and brown in the shadings. The feathers are strikingly indented with dark markings. The reeve is considerably less than her mate in size. After the warty excrescence has left the ruff, its hues become very similar to some of the true snipes and sandpipers.

THE GREBE.

The Grebe, or Greve.—As this bird is frequently brought down by the gunner, it is not misplaced in our pages. It is a link between the web-footed tribe and the *Gallinules* and Coots. It is much larger than

either of the latter. Its legs appear formed only for swimming; like those of the former class, they are almost hid in the under parts of the bird: the toes are short, fringed, and finny. The wings have somewhat the appearance of being clipped sideways; and thus it seems as little formed for rising in the air as for walking on land. Its habits entirely assimilate with its formation. The appetites and habits of this bird claim affinity with the web-footed class; for it preys upon fish, and passes its existence swimming and diving,—just exhibiting the head above, and darting completely under, water, at the least appearance of danger. It is very shy, and very difficult to be shot. It occurs in Wales and the north-western counties of England, where it is found to breed among the reeds and flags of the picturesque meres of those districts. The plumage is for the most part white and black, with shadings. The nests are made to float on the tops of the reeds and rushes of the shallow pools it best loves to frequent, and are only supported by the strength of the creeping roots of the marginal weeds. The grebe was, some time back, a more numerous class than at present. It was greatly sought after for the furry down of its breast, which presents the most silvery gloss, and of a hue more silken than that of Genoa velvet. As, where once it settles its abode, there it continues till its extirpation, however much disturbed, it may be imagined that not much difficulty occurred in finding its haunt and securing the bird (although of a wary

nature). The female is much attached to her young, and seeks out, with indefatigable research, the small eels and fry of river fish, that are within her scope, for her hungry brood; after which she will conduct them to the nest under her wings, or even, it is said, upon her back. At the time of incubation, the glossed down of their breasts is entirely wanting. Of this bird may truly be said, what the poet has falsely sung of the woodland tribe of song-birds :—

> " Chaste are their instincts, faithful is their fire;
> No foreign beauty tempts to false desire.
> The snow-white vesture and the glittering crown,
> The simple plumage, or the glossy down,
> Prompts not their love. The patriot bird pursues
> His well-acquainted tints and kindred hues."

The counties of Shropshire and Cheshire were formerly the most plentifully supplied with the grebe, or greve.

The Common Curlew (*Scolopax arquata. Numenius arquata*).—In our enumeration of the different game and water-birds of the British islands, we have thought it unnecessary to class every variety of the different species. Few sporting writers give correct denominations to the different links of the great families of British birds. They mingle the Long-beak, and some of the Totani, with the Snipe family; more accordantly with the provincial customs of the counties to which the particular species resort, than with ornithological truth. The Red-shank, or Pool Snipe is one of these; the Common Totanus, or

Sandy Lavrock, or Sand Lark (the Common Sandpiper) another, frequently mistaken. And, continuing through the next family of the *Tringæ*, or aquatic

THE COMMON CURLEW.

Sandpipers (the Purre, or Dunlin, the Ruff and Reeve, the Knot, and other varieties of the Sandpipers), we shall constantly find one species intermingled with another by every writer but the practical naturalist and true ornithologist. The Curlew Sandpiper will often pass for the Purre, or Dunlin, and as often for the Knot, or the Stint, while the Little Stint has been described as the Ox-bird. Passing by

these several intermediates, we now come to the Curlew, a well-known bird of our pastoral districts and sub-alpine heaths. It is a frequent inhabitant of Scotland, where in the north, even to Shetland and the Orkneys, it breeds. Its European range is northward, Norway, Sweden, the Feroe Islands, and Iceland. Curlews are known in China, in the south of Africa, and in the East.

The generic characters of the family are remarkable: "Bill very long, slender, slightly compressed, curved, the tip nearly round, hard, the mandible projecting over the maxilla; nostrils linear, lateral; face feathered; wings rather long, pointed, spurious quill rigid; legs proportionally, of middle length; *tibiæ* bare for some length above the tarsal joint; feet rather small; toes before connected by a basal membrane; hallux articulated above the plane of the others."

The curlew breeds inland, and resorts to the coasts in the cold season. The curlew's scream, or shrill whistle, is, perhaps, better known than most of the calls of the aquatic birds. They are a noisy, brave, and somewhat pugnacious tribe. When the breeding season has commenced, the heath, or moor, or sheep-walk, is alive with these creatures ere the first faint streak of dawn has broadened in colour; and here, clamorous with the gladness of the period, the males rise upon the wing, uttering their singular note, and whirl along in sweeping line, slowly and stately, while undisturbed. At any intrusion, they boldly fly before the face of the stranger,

and with something like the noisy scream of the gander, they will almost seem to attack him, till, in their turn, intimidated by a shot or a stone. The nest is a very careless one, being on the ground, and placed in a dry spot either of moss or heath, even in a furrow, or field of new-sown grain. Some grass, or dry leaves, forms its scanty lining. The young of the common curlew used to be deemed tender and excellent eating. The plumage of the head, neck, and breast, is of a pale yellowish brown, varying in depth of tint, and darkest on the crown; the shafts of the feathers of a deeper brown, which broadens at the bottoms, forming those triangular markings so common in birds. The underneath parts are of a bluish white, but on the belly and sides the white is variegated with dashes of brown. The upper parts are rich-tinted, shot with purple, the feathers cut out in grey and ash-colour and white. There is a gloss of purple also on the brown quills, and the axillary feathers are barred with ash-colour and brown; the tail is white, barred with an ashy brown tint, and the bars indented with reddish white; bill deep brown at the tip, and shading into a pinky yellow; legs and feet of a lead colour.

The Whimbrel Curlew of British authors (*Scolopax pheopus*, Linn. *Numenius pheopus*, Latham, &c.). —This variety is not so common in England as the last-mentioned; nor does it breed with us. Its dissimilarities with the common curlew are chiefly two. Its differing call, expressed by its name of

whimbrel, and its merely passenger visits to our coasts in spring, winter, and autumn, instead of the constant residence of the former. It is said, that in the north Scottish islands it is found to breed; but little is known of its breeding stations; and we think it a doubtful point, as the summer birds that occasionally occur may have been stopped in their passage. It was formerly, and may now be, "a regular spring visitant in Ireland, in passage northward, to return in autumn in much smaller numbers," according to Thompson's "History." A farmer, not many miles from Belfast, assured us ten years ago, that he had shot some of these birds. It is a pretty sight, on an unquiet day, when coming upon an isolated part of the coast, to see a flock of curlews and a smaller portion of whimbrels, gregariously feeding together in the salt pools formed among the shingles and sand-beds at ebb-tide. When they fly, it is in the phalanx form, closely wedged together, and dip low and high in the air, as though they were diving in the water. The common curlew skims more, with a sailing motion; and the wings of both varieties being long, pointed, and strong, are as admirably adapted to fly high; as the moor-hen and the gallinule's wings are ill constructed for length or rapidity of motion. The differences of plumage between these birds are slight. The crown of the whimbrel is separated in the middle by a paler streak of colour, the tips of the feathers being, for a broad space, white, while on either side they have patches

of brown to edge them. There is more white on the upper part of the back of the whimbrel; next to the bill the space is white, as also the sides of the head, neck, and under parts, with splashes of dark brown; the bill is of deeper hue, red at the base; and the legs are leaden grey colour, thicker, and somewhat shorter than in the common curlew. These birds do not change their plumage at the period of incubation.

THE BALD COOT

The Coot comes under the head *Rallidæ;* which family comprises the Rails and Crakes, the Gallinules, or Water-fowls, as well as the Coot species. As the Common Coot is a larger bird than the moor-hen, so it chooses larger streams, and more insulated localities. It is more wary and less sociable. The coot is

the *Fulica atra* of Linn., the *Foulque macroule* of Temminck. It is found rather extensively in the southern counties of England, becomes more rare northward, and is altogether lost sight of in the alpine regions of Scotland; its occurrence being confined to the neighbourhood of the smaller lochs. Nevertheless, it is occasionally mentioned in the Orkneys. The Bald Coot arrives in North Britain the first fine spring days, and rarely stays through the winter, unless an unusually mild one. Some of these birds dive with the facility of the penguin kind, and keep under, while hunting for their food in the still waters they select *par préférence*, for a great length of time, eating, as is supposed, whatever may come within their reach,—pond-weed, aquatic larvæ, insects, &c. In the larger rivers of England they collect in immense numbers, and are then caught by means of the weirs used for catching fish, while they are searching for the small fish and *insectivora*. At breeding season they become scattered in pairs, and so remain until the autumn, when again they assemble together in companies. Their nests are made in the river rushes, or in the reeds of the plashy brakes that are found near our estuaries. They are of considerable size, and they use the materials within reach in their construction. As we have said, the bald coot is a shy bird, and, except at the season of incubation, difficult of approach. It flies with its long legs outstretched in its rear. The coot, it is said, weighs about twenty-four ounces. Its bald forehead appears rather a con-

tinuation of its bill to the crown than any absence of feathering; it is of a pinky milk white, the bill pinkish. The dark blackish grey of the general plumage of the bird, shaded with deep black, forms a striking contrast with this white space; the underneath surface of the wings are of a glossy silver grey; the *tibiæ* are orange colour, the legs dull green. The membrane of the toes scolloped out, in contradistinction to the straight membrane of the *gallinuli*. The young, upon escape from the shell, are duly protected with a thick covering of strong, stiff, hair-like down, black everywhere but the head, where it is red, or yellow red. Varieties of the plumage sometimes occur.

The Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*, Linn.).—The Redwing, like the fieldfare, visits us merely for the mildness of our climate in the season of rigour. It is described as about eight inches long, although such as we have shot we should have deemed shorter. It weighs about two ounces or more. Its plumage in hue is between that of a sparrow and a thrush. With us it is not melodious; but in its summer abodes, where daylight for many weeks continues to gladden the eye, as in Norway and other countries of similar latitudes, it is esteemed one of the chief warblers of the forest, its note being both piercing and sweet. It is known immediately from the thrush by the brightness of a white mark above the eyes. In olden days the redwing was esteemed equal to the beccafico, and a choice morsel for a

Roman Emperor. It was exported to Italy, and fattened for sale. This bird is neither so wild nor so wary as its near neighbour, the fieldfare; it is, however, sufficiently cautious, and, when flying in numbers, takes a precaution, from which we have borrowed our stratagem in war,—that of stationing outposts, or sentinels, on some eminence or tree-top, to give notice of the approach of danger.

In the season of flight, as the bird-catchers call it, these little creatures were formerly taken in great numbers, in common with the woodlark and the fieldfare, and, indeed, with all the other small green-birds, by the nets and arts of the fowler. In the autumn he prepares his machinery,—his nets, his *flier*-birds, and his decoy birds. The net is from ten to twelve yards long, or more, and two or three wide. It is so formed, as to be easy to rise on either side and encircle the birds, as any one may witness who will follow the wheat-ear catcher on the Sussex Downs. As birds in their passage fly against the wind, the fowler lays his net to gain the wind, and if it is easterly, he will lay his net as far to the west as possible. His call-birds are selected carefully by the sweetness and power of their notes. It appears that these decoy birds never exert themselves more powerfully than when thus luring the free birds of their tribes into captivity. Linnets and larks, gold and green finches, the bullfinch and yellow hammer, the tit-lark, and a variety of others, can be used for this purpose. The *flier*-birds are those placed on a

movable perch, which the fowler uplifts at will, by means of a string, when he would tempt the wild bird downwards. It is remarked, that when half a flock have been allured into the nets by the shrill jerking call of the decoys, the remainder will alight near; and, far from being deterred by the circumstance, are certain to become also victims of the artifice. Whether curiosity, love of song, or pugnacious bravery, bring the wild birds so easily to the call, it is impossible to determine. That it should be desire, seems unlikely; for the male birds pipe: and male birds are equally numerous, if not more so, than the female wild ones, thus entrapped for the ladies' aviary, or the epicure's table. This, however, is not the only trap laid for them. As the redwings do not roost on the ground, nets are often thrown over trees and hedges, in which they are taken.

The Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*, Linn.).—This little bird, of the sparrow kind, makes but a short stay in our country; is wild and tuneless, flies in flocks, and is perhaps the most wary of the smaller species. In Norway and Sweden, and the cold regions generally, the fieldfare tunes his pipe as harmoniously as many of the little warblers, although with us so dull and insipid a bird. Fieldfares migrate to our coasts, tempted hither by the mildness of our winters, and the variety of berries our trees and hedge-rows supply, which form the staple of their food. The rigorous season past, they return to their beloved forests of maple and sycamore, where they sing the live-long day, to

reward the partners of their cares in the laborious season of incubation; building their nests in the hedges or low woods, with symmetry and research. These they carefully conceal by those instinctive arts so common to the smaller tribes; bending twigs,

THE FIELDFARE.

leaves, and branches, in artful mazes, to screen them from view. They lay about six bluish green eggs, spotted considerably with black.

The fieldfare is from nine to ten inches long, and sixteen or seventeen broad. It weighs considerably more than the redwing. Its plumage is lively, and its flesh not equal to its smaller neighbour above

mentioned, although a delicacy. It arrives in great numbers about October; and at first, in all the bustle of settling, may be shot at without much difficulty. Its back feathers are of shades of ash colour; its head of a light ash; its bill is yellowish black; and the bird is immediately known from the length of its mouth hairs, or whiskers. Its breast is spotted with dark colours on a light ground; its rump is ash colour. Its bill is slender and soft, capable only of attacking berries and insects' eggs; it is, therefore, one of the large class of necessary helps to man's comfort and convenience, as it assists to destroy the vermin that infests the trees and vegetables cultivated by him. The fieldfares are fattest while their autumnal food still hangs on the bush, or remains on the ground; after which time they have recourse to the moist soils for worms. Mr. White says, that it is rather surprising, in the natural history of these charming edibles, that being of habits nearly akin to those of so many other small birds of the soft billed songster tribe, such as blackbirds, thrushes, &c., they should not be known to have bred together. He also observes that the fieldfare roosts on the ground at night (the period when the fowlers' nets are principally spread for their captives over stubble and meadow), while in the day-time it always perches high, on the tops of the tallest trees and hedgerows. It appears that, considering the prodigious flocks that sometimes alight on our coasts, we secure but a small quantity of these birds, in comparison with the numbers captured on

the continent. Whether they come to us at a more wary season we do not know. However, they become sufficiently tame when they suffer from a deficiency of food in hard weather; but are then not so worthy the aim of the true sportsman, as when they are full and fat.

The Lark (*Alanda arvensis*, Linn.).—One of our poets thus addresses this sweet warbler:—

"Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher,
From the earth thou springest;
Like a cloud of fire,
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thy own kind? What ignorance of pain?"

SHELLEY.

It is, indeed, true of this bird, the favourite of the skiey space, that its song is gladsome and enlivening; and that as it darts upwards, in the clear radiance of dawn, its exulting and far-reaching note appears the harbinger of fullest day. The lark is a salacious bird; nor is it difficult to form a hybrid between it and the linnet, and other small birds.

When kept in confinement, the pipe of the lark becomes harsh and piercing; it is only when winging its flight, by way of encouragement to the female, in the free native air, that it possesses that bounding and elastic sweetness on which poets delight to expatiate. It is a note of confidence and security, to assure his mate that no danger threatens, and that he is near her, to participate and to soften her cares. This diminutive species have much courage; they are often, when contending for the female, formidable to each other; but their genial desires past, they relapse into timidity, or show their bravery in a different and more amicable manner. We have ourselves often witnessed a struggle for victory in song between two of these birds; and, indeed, with most of the thrush and sparrow kind, there seems to exist a love of harmony distinct from the note of blandishment or call of desire. Let a harp be placed on a lawn, and played upon, and it shall prove the decoy of a number of grove songsters; each little throat shall contend with its music. A lady of our acquaintance assured us that she had often been compelled to quit her instrument from the noise made in rivalry by these birds, who would perch on the lower branches around her during their noisy efforts. The different larks may be divided into the sky-lark, the wood, and the titlark; they are known from other small species by the length of their heel or spur. They build their nests upon the ground, thinking that sods of turf can shelter and conceal them, and choosing every soil in

preference to a clayey one; they also are observed to build so that every part of the nest is equally raised. The edges are thatched, and slope a little outwards. The lark is constant in our islands, migrating, however, from one part of the country to another. It lays four or five eggs, of different sizes, according to its variety, of a dusky hue. Its general tints are reddish brown, and in some more lively than in others, so as to be almost red. On the crown of the head it bears a tuft of feathers which distinguishes it from birds of its class; these it erects at will. It deposits its eggs in May, although they have been seen even as late as September. Dr. Latham mentions that larks are an article of great importance in some of the continental countries,—"the duty paid at Leipsic for larks amounts to twelve thousand crowns per annum, at a grosch, or twopence-halfpenny, for every sixty larks." It is when the song of the bird leaves it that it assembles in flocks, and becomes the prey of the bird catchers. The lark is a bird of passage in some countries, chiefly the cold ones; and thousands fall by the way in the migrations, chiefly by the net of the fowler.

Water-hen, or Moor hen, or common Gallinule of British authors (*Gallinulæ chloropus*).—This aquatic bird is the link between the crake family and that of the coots. As their wings are little formed for flight, so the strong, naked legs, large feet, and long toes, seem to render land and water their chief elements. Indeed this species swim and dive with equal facility;

resort to ponds, pools, and rivers, where, under cover of any sort of aquatic or marsh vegetation, their breeding places may be constantly discovered, and their nests found amid the reeds and roots, rather high up, and sometimes six or seven feet from the water, in the brushwood or willow reeds. Its habits are by no means shy, and it is a beautiful creature in

THE WATER-HEN.

its gayest plumage. Jardine mentions, that it will even come near dwelling-places, where food is regularly placed for it. On the least alarm, it will duck its head and fore part of body under the water, and then plunge into the first hole or cover of brushwood, where its bill alone will be protruded above the still water of its preferred localities. It is fond of perching on low trees or bushes; and, on emergencies, will

fly to some height, and seek concealment on the tops of the highest trees in its vicinity. The common gallinule, or moor-hen, is abundant among the lesser lochs and tarns of Scotland. Pursuit seems to paralyse the faculties of this bird; as we have known it to remain, as it were, fascinated by the idea of danger, squatted among the vegetation, where it will suffer itself to be caught without a struggle till it is in captivity. Its young are numerous, and covered with a black down.

Jardine thus describes the feathers of the moor-hen in spring:—"The base of the bill, and shield on the forehead, now considerably enlarged, is a bright red; and contrasts well, or enlivens the deep blackish grey of the head, throat, neck, and under parts: this colour shades into a deep green on the upper parts, at this season glossed with deep reflections, which are spread on the sides of the breasts; the quills are nearly pale umber brown, the outer edge of the first, with the bend of the wing, white; the tail, rounded at the tip, is black, shaded into deep oil green, and shows the narrow cross dark markings incident to structure, seen in various incessorial birds, and in the aquatic genus *Plotus*. On the lower part of the belly and vent the feathers are tipped with greyish white, which prevails more or less on the centre of these parts; and on the flanks, where the oil green predominates, the feathers are dashed with long streaks of white, but those of the vent are deep black, and run in upon them in an angular point; the naked parts of the *tibiæ* are bright vermillion red, shading to yel-

low, and often appear conspicuous; the feet and legs are olive green. In the female the colours are not so bright, and the frontal shield does not cover so large a space." The bill is compressed, but not very short; the wings are short and concave; the legs long. The nest is made of sticks and fibres, or dry reeds; and when the hen is within it, she is swinged to and fro by the action of the water and wind underneath her: we have seen the nest, however, disengaged by some mishap, and floating in the midst of the stream. The eggs are sharp at one end, and of whitish green colour, spotted with red. The water-hen weighs from fifteen ounces upwards. This is the *Poule d'eau ordinaire* of Temminck. The gallinule is of somewhat dissimilar habits to those we have mentioned, when found in the solitary Scottish moors untenanted but by the feathered tribe and wild animals. Here she is not so easily alarmed as where breeding in the vicinity of gentlemen's mansions; but when once disturbed, has been known never again to resort to the same locality, but at once seeks a new abode, where, summer and winter, she will continue until destroyed by the sportsman, or the more numerous enemies of the brute creation, to whose invasion she is exposed without any means of protection. The falcon, the kite, the buzzard, the otter, are the most usual despoilers of the water-hens. As they cannot fly far, they are more defenceless than most other of the aquatic birds.

THE WATER SPANIEL.

The Spaniel (*Canis extrarius*). Water Spaniel of British authors.—Mr. Whittaker thus enumerates the five original races of British dogs:—The Great Household Dog; the Greyhound; the Bulldog; the Terrier; and the Large Slow-hound.

Of these it will be seen the spaniel is not one. Jardine justly remarks, that in this list the races are confounded; for the great household dog is with him the mastiff, with no powers of scent, and different from the bulldog, to whom he attributes great keenness of nose. He looks upon the greyhound as the *Vertagus*, or British *Ver. Trach.*, while some writers only deem it the lurcher. The British terrier he looks upon as differing from the crooked legged turnspit of Europe, specified by Greek writers. Sir W. Jardine says, that the *Canis tuscus*, praised by Nemesianus, was identical with our water-spaniel. On various Roman monuments this dog is evidently figured. The spaniel tribe is a numerous one, and variously designated, from the beautiful little creature known as Charles the Second's, or the Duke of Norfolk's, breed, to the handsome springer, by some deemed the most serviceable shooting companion to the gunner, of the entire sporting races. The springer and the cocker are the only two dogs, legitimately called spaniels, used in wood and water craft: albeit, some call the smaller Newfoundland breed, spaniels.

Printed authorities vary considerably when making the definition of the spaniel. One says, "The cocker, or gun spaniel, of true perfect breed, is of one general or whole colour,—either black, or black tan, commonly called King Charles's breed; or red in different shades, paler or deeper:" and another says, "The true English bred spaniel differs but little from the setter, save in size."

Of all species, the spaniel has the truest attachment to the human race, and is of the gayest as well as the most affectionate disposition. In form it is that of the small setter; the colours of the silky hair being either black and white, liver-coloured and white, pied, brown, or black. The so-termed water spaniel is best known by its alertness in hunting and swimming in the water; its hair, also, is a little harder and stiffer than the land spaniel. The springer, too well known as the gun spaniel to need specification, is usually smaller than the water spaniel (a dog greatly used in decoys); its shape is particularly graceful, and its liveliness renders it a great favourite with gunners used to this breed: it is generally a white-haired dog, with rich red spots and black muzzle; while the cocker is oftenest black, and is a smaller dog, with shorter legs, and shorter in the back. It has also a shorter and rounder head, and is altogether of more compact frame and make; the ears long and silky, as well as the tail and legs, and the hair all more curly than the larger spaniel. King Charles's spaniel is supposed to be the parent of the cocker breed of dogs.

The Blenheim is almost similar in appearance to the latter, but the cocker's black coat is relieved in the Blenheim (or, as it is indifferently called, the Marlborough, or *Pyrami*, of Buffon) by red spots above the eyes, and on the breast and feet. He has a shorter back, and is fuller in the nose and palate. The *Bichon* of Buffon, *Canis Melitæus*, is the most ancient of the diminutive spaniel races, and the huge Alpine spaniel the most sagacious and courageous. From very ancient times the spaniel breed has engaged much attention from sportsmen. In the East, the greatest possible pains were taken to propagate them; for as all game was brought down by the gun, or in decoys, so these races were considered the only ones fitted for these uses. The spaniel race is somewhat famous in history. The highest order of distinction in Denmark was founded in honour of a dog of this kind, named Wildbrat, that remained faithful to the sovereign of that kingdom, when the human race had deserted him in adversity. The motto of this order, now called the Order of the Elephant, is, "Wildbrat was Faithful;" and the instinctive fidelity of this species is furthermore historically specified in the account given of Lodebroch, a prince of Denmark, who was driven on the English coast, with his hawks and his dogs, and was taken up as a piratical spy, and brought before Edmund, king of the East Angles. Edmund, however, was soon undeceived, and Lodebroch became a great favourite with him, on account of his skill in hawking and hunting. He was at last

murdered by a falconer jealous of his favour, who concealed his remains in the woods. None knew his fate, till a dog, worn by famine and grief, came to Edmund and fawned upon him with expressive gestures; and the king followed him to the spot where the body lay. The murder was avenged, as it was thought, by the enforcement of the *Lex Talionis*. The falconer was put into Lodebroch's boat, and committed to the mercy of the waves. Unfortunately, the purposes of justice were not, in this case, achieved, for the wretch was borne to Denmark, when, to avoid the torture, he accused Edmund as the assassin of Lodebroch, and was thus the occasion of the first Danish invasion. The instances of attachment recorded of spaniels are most numerous. They will sometimes take a liking for kittens, and even birds; but their general fondness is for the human race. There is one affecting example related of a spaniel in Paris, in 1799. It was so severe a frost that the Seine was thickly frozen over; but a thaw had commenced, when a number of youths chose still to continue the sport of skating. One, named *Beaumavoir*, a young student, and the possessor of a small spaniel, had only gone on the treacherous ice, near the quay of the *Hôtel des Monnaies*, when it broke, and his body disappeared The small spaniel, by his frantic grief, gave the alarm, but no assistance could be rendered; and the poor creature's howlings only served to warn others from the unsafe spot. That day, and the following night, the animal remained to watch for his master's

re-appearance; and still, the day after, he was at his post. Some persons made him a bed of straw, and some brought him food, but to these testimonials of kindness and admiration he remained insensible, rejecting both. He would run backwards and forwards, in great distress, upon the ice, but always came back to the same sleeping place. He bit a soldier who would have forced him away, who, fearing that he was mad, fired at and wounded him. People came in crowds to gaze at the poor spaniel; and, at last, a woman prevailed upon it to have its wound dressed. She carried it home with her, and we believe succeeded, after a lapse of time, in making it again comfortable and happy. Of the thousand pet spaniels of idle ladies, we sometimes hear remarkable accounts of their cunning in eluding orders, given before them, to which they were averse, relative to their personal treatment.

Springers and cockers are made use of in greyhound coursing; but the cocker, who hunts closer, and is not so full of bustle as the springer, is of the more utility to the sportsman. Colonel Hawker remarks, with regard to spaniels, that they are, nine times out of ten, so badly broken in, as in general to be only fit to drive a large wood; but, if taught to keep always within half a gun-shot, they are the best dogs in existence for working among hassocks and briars. They should be trained very young, or they require an unmerciful degree of flogging; and it is sometimes advisable, at first, to hunt them with a

fore foot tied up in the collar. We subjoin another hint of a valuable experience:—"Spaniels for pheasant and cock shooting cannot be too strong, too short upon the leg, or have too much courage. To be in a perfect state of discipline, they must follow a hare no further than whilst it is in view; when once put into covert, must not quit it to range in the fields, which some slippery ones will do; and must be in their places twisting round every stub with agility, and possess such fineness of nose, that neither woodcock nor pheasant can escape their search." It will be perceived, that if sportsmen often become enthusiasts in favour of this sort of dog over every other, it can be no easy affair to train up a team of spaniels. One or two must be taught to fetch and carry, or, as some think, but one in a team; else, in disputing which shall carry the game, they will break it. For a general summary of desirable form in the spaniel, take this:—They should stand on short, bony legs, be powerfully made all over, with a speaking eye, a large head, and large, long, drooping ears.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WILD FOWL SHOOTING.

SHOOTING THE WILD SWAN.

"That lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat."

For many reasons, logical as well as fanciful, this may be called "the poetry of sport." Poetry is scarce—far more rare than the journeymen of Parnassus have an idea—and so is wild swan shooting; and can imagination conceive anything more sublimated above powder and patent shot work, in general, than assisting at the obsequies of a *prima donna* of the feathered choir, who pours out her life in ravishing harmonies? The reader, peradventure, shall doubt the popular rumour, that this bird makes her exit "to soft music:" presently we will deal with his suspicion.

It need hardly be premised, that the chances of shooting wild swans are "few and far between," even

to the most constant fowlers. Nevertheless, when the accident does arrive, the swans appear to "come not single spies but in battalions." Colonel Hawker tells us, "On one occasion I knocked down eight at a shot,—seven old ones and one brown one, and they averaged *nineteen pounds each;*" and at Dungeness something of the same extent was done by somebody, whose name is not preserved. When swans are to be met with in these islands, it is under circumstances most unfavourable to them. They seldom or never are found among us, except when overtaken by the rigour of an extremely severe winter, and then their flight is very low; and, when they alight, they are very easily approached. Their size, too, renders them a mark very difficult to miss; so that when the shooter gets within distance, he can hardly avoid killing his bird, though he may not find it quite so easy to "bag" him. When in flight, the swan should be shot at beneath the wing; when sitting, take him in the head. Always shoot at a hooper from behind, so as to throw your shot under the feathers; they will turn almost anything short of slugs, if fired at on the surface. Colonel Hawker gives a very comical picture of himself and his man going about to circumvent wild swans on the coast of Hants. Having made out a sort of Lilliputian iceberg, all stuck over with these interesting specimens of ornithology, he floated towards them in his punt, "having previously covered myself and my man with clean white linen, and a white nightcap." The swans must have had strong

nerves to stand the approach of such apparitions. We doubt whether either the master or man would have stood their ground had they seen a brace of figures stealing upon them through the grey dawn "in clean white linen and white nightcaps."

Upon the vexed question of the music made by the dying swan, Mr. Colquhoun has an anecdote so interesting, and so simple withal, that we cannot resist transferring it to our pages. He has already related an incident of his early wild fowl shooting career, and thus proceeds:—

"Another stormy mid-winter day, a farmer sent to let us know that a flock of wild swans had appeared off the shore. My brother and I instantly started with our duck guns. When we had reconnoitred with our glasses from a rising ground, we saw that the flock were resting some hundred yards from the land, but had little doubt, from the high wind, that they would soon seek its shelter. We accordingly chose different stations, and crawling to them with the utmost caution, waited patiently for upwards of an hour. At last the swans, by imperceptible degrees, and much turning and wheeling, neared the shore, opposite my brother; but the water being shallow, they began to feed as soon as their long necks could sound the bottom. He was thus forced to rush down to the edge, and take the distant shot. One lay badly wounded: had the wind been blowing towards the shore, the swan was so disabled, he could not have made head against it, but as it blew side-

ways, the creature managed to paddle itself out into the waves, every now and then uttering its wild, piping cry. There was no boat nearer than a mile; we, however, set off full speed, and with a shock-headed urchin at the helm, launched into the deep. The wind was blowing a perfect gale, the waves lashing over, wetting us to the skin; and every time we changed our course, we were in danger of being swamped. We had almost given up hope, especially as the white foam of the bursting waves was so exactly like the object of our search as to prevent our distinguishing it at any distance, when the 'gilly' at the helm called out, 'I hear him.' All eyes were strained in every direction, and the poor swan was at last seen rising over the billows like the spirit of the tempest. There was much difficulty, and some danger, in getting it safe on board, and, in all probability, we should never have perceived it, *had it not betrayed itself by its dying song.*"

The Wild Swan, or Hooper, of British authors (*Anas cygnus*).—It is supposed by some eminent naturalists of the present day, that there are several varieties of the wild swan, and a couple, or more, of the hooper.

In three killed by Colonel Hawker at a shot (of the latter variety), the space above the bill was of bright yellow. In another place he also killed three at a shot, and of these the space above the bills was pale flesh colour. The Linnæan Society have discovered another distinct species, smaller, and *internally*

different from the common hooper, which they have named after Mr Bewick.

This bird is of internal conformation very different from the tame swan. It is usually less than a fourth of the size, weighing from thirteen to twenty-one pounds, the average being about sixteen pounds

THE WILD SWAN.

in the wild, and twenty upwards in the tame, bird. But these are slight differences compared to that of its plumage, and, above all, to those found upon dissection.

In opposition to the general theory on the subject of its vocality, we have Col. Hawker's testimony, that

the swan possesses at least two notes of the musical gamut, even in a domesticated state. Who can therefore assert that the species may not have degenerated? that Plato and Aristotle, and Diodorus Siculus were not correct in their belief of the swan's vocality? Hear what Pendasius says on the subject,—that he had often heard swans sweetly singing in the Mantuan lake, as he rowed up and down in his boat. Olaus Warmius, too, the learned, declared there was in his family a very honest young man, John Rostorph, a student in divinity, who upon oath solemnly affirmed, that once, in the territory of Drontheim, in Norway, he was standing upon the sea-shore early in the morning, when he heard a most musical murmur, composed of sweet whistlings and pleasant sounds; and looking about him, and climbing to the top of a certain promontory, he there espied an infinite flock of wild swans in a bay, producing this most delightful harmony, the sweetest in his life-time he had ever heard. This is, at least, as pleasant a fiction to read as one of La Fontaine's fables; and well doth the poetical moralist make use of it, who contrasts the last song of the swan with the hymn of jubilee on the lips of the good dying man. Reverting to prosaic fact, we find the hooper's cry to be particularly wild and disagreeable, and harsh enough in its clangor to banish the least notion of the melody of its species. The wild swan is found in the Hebrides all the year round, as it breeds there. This very elegant bird is a constant visiter, and that in large companies, to

the Irish coasts, and, indeed, to the interior of that island. As we have before alluded to the written rumour of its melodious quality, we can ourself assert, that we have heard sounds proceeding from a flight of swans vastly more harmonious than the race of water fowl are in the habit of producing. They were not, so far as our ear could detect, separate notes, but rather a consecutive and combined harmony,—an idea which may be imperfectly given by comparing it with the sustained tones of an organ.

It is a remarkable feature in the natural history of this bird, that wherever it is found in a wild state, it is white, so to speak; or, at least, but little varies from that hue, except in New Holland, where it is black, or of a tint scarcely removed from black.

Perhaps, in animated nature, there is not a more beautiful sight than the flight of the royal family of the swans. There they are, winging their stately way over morasses and marshes, over lakes and lakelets, perchance from icy Siberia, or inhospitable Lapland: from Iceland or Spitzbergen, or far away from the arctic and unknown regions of America, do they hither come. These climes were their summer dwellings and breeding-places, with Norway and Sweden, and other ice-bound European lands; for there the sun never sets for weeks, but nurses innumerable beds of insect food for their use and service. Professor Wilson thus imaginatively and aptly describes a flock covering the wide waters at the head of Loch

Maree, or, silent and asleep, riding at anchor around Lomond's isles:—

"'T is now mid-day—and, lo! in that mediterranean a flock of wild swans! Have they dropped down from the ether into the water almost as pure as ether, without having once folded their wings since they rose aloft to shun the insupportable northern snows, hundreds of leagues beyond the storm-swept Orcades? To look at the quiet creatures, you might think that they had never left the circle of that little loch. *There they hang on their shadows*, even as if asleep in the sunshine; and now stretching out their long wings—how apt for flight from clime to clime! Joyously they beat the liquid radiance, till to the land flapping high rises the mist, and wide spreads the foam almost sufficient for a rainbow. Safe are they from all birds of prey. The osprey dashes down on the teal; the great erne, or sea-eagle, pounces on the mallard, as he mounts from the bulrushes before the wild swans sailing, with all wings hoisted, like a fleet; but osprey nor eagle dares to try his talons on that stately bird,—for he is bold in his beauty, and formidable as he is fair. The pinions that swim and soar can also smite; and though the one be a lover of war, the other of peace, yet of these it may be said—

'The eagle he is lord above,
The swan is lord below!'

To have shot such a creature—so large—so white—so high-soaring, and on the winds of midnight wafted so far,—a creature that seemed not merely a

stranger in that loch but belonging to some mysterious land in another hemisphere, whose coast ships have been known to visit, driving under bare poles through a month's snow-storms,—was an era in our lives. Once, and once only, we were involved in the glory of that event. The creature had been in a dream of some river or lake of Kamschatka, or ideally listening

> 'Across the waves' tumultuous roar,
> The wolf's long howl from Oonalaskka's shore,'

when, guided by our good genius and our brightest star, we suddenly saw him sitting asleep in all his state, within gunshot, in a bay of the moonlit loch! We blew his black bill into pieces,—not a feather on his head but was touched; and, like a little white-sailed pleasure-boat caught in a whirlwind, the wild swan spun round, and then lay motionless on the waters, as if all her masts had gone by the board;—the mighty foreign bird, whose plumage we had never hoped to touch but in a dream, lying like the ghost of something that ought not to have been destroyed."

WILD GOOSE SHOOTING.

In spite of the enthusiasm displayed by the writers on wild fowl shooting, in their accounts of "hair breadth 'scapes"—their "moving accidents by flood"—it reads like anything but sport. There is certainly no accounting for taste, especially the taste that takes its pleasure in the mud on the Hampshire coast, or

navigates the bay of Tees in a yacht which resembles nothing so much as a pig-trough. Some men would imagine,—crawling on all fours, through a wilderness of sludge, only fit for a Norfolk islander; some think it capital fun, and follow it on the "oozes," as the scavengers' continents are professionally called. A gallant colonel, who has written on this amusement, *con amore*, falls to loggerheads with those who don't or can't like it as much as himself, and calls them dandies, and other hard names. He tells you, "the usual way of sallying forth, for this purpose (that is to say, for wild fowl shooting), is to drive to an inn, on the coast, call the waiter, who recommends an honest boatman, for whom the boots is immediately dispatched. On his arrival, he sees how eager you are to set sail, fixes his price accordingly, shews you thousands of birds where he knows a boat can never get at them; obliges you with a few of his own killing, at double their value; and your day ends with a ten pound bill, and, perhaps, bagging a couple of sea-gulls."

This don't look promising, and yet the best way for the young aspirant after this high flavoured gunning, is really to put himself into the hands of some professor of the science. This individual will, at all events, equip him for the same, with the thousand appliances necessary for the craft, and this is nine-tenths of the battle. It is not any part of our design in these pages to teach "the young idea how to shoot" wild-fowl in the preserves of old Neptune; we dare not do so in a work professing to deal with recrea-

tions in sporting: sea-gunning is not amusement according to the general average idea of pastime. Captain Lacey, who wrote the last book upon the subject, heads one of his leading chapters, "Risking it," and puts to it the motto, "Man is, and ever will be, mad." Canoe-cannonading and mud-battueing, certainly, are not suited for a particularly tame spirit; therefore, we again repeat, he who would follow them cannot do better than put himself into the hands of a professional gunner, and into a patent life preserving belt. But there is a species of wild fowl shooting appropriate to persons in their senses, and in this the young amateur may indulge; as we proceed to lay before him.

Many of the inland waters of England are the resort of wild fowl, and these afford quite as much of this sport as any ordinary appetite can desire. We will suppose our shooter has fixed upon the spot for his diversion; he will then select a suitable gun, which is an indispensable provision. Let it be double-barrelled, and a good sized one, fit to carry No. 4 shot, with a good distribution. Next, his care should be to have a perfect retreiver. Let this be an animal which will, on occasion, beat the rushes, osier-beds, &c. He must be as mute as a mole, docile, wary, and under perfect command. If not all these, just as you are within shot of a flock of glorious teal, he begins whimpering, and your birds take French leave. Mr. Colquhoun says, a dog of a very cool temper will retrieve wild fowl better in

W. HARVEY, DEL. FRED. W. BRANSTON, SC.

WILD DUCK SHOOTING.

loch shooting—a noble highland sport, as good, in fact, as any of their wild diversions—than another with quicker movements, and perhaps a finer nose. Many of the cripples in this shooting take refuge in reeds and bushes, and the keen tempered dog is apt to overrun them, thus losing time; whereas, the other slowly tracks them, one by one, to their hiding place. His third essential is a small pocket telescope. Thus equipped, he enters upon his wild fowling, which combines, of course, the pursuit of all aquatic birds coming under the title of wild fowl. As the method of sporting is the same with all, so far as the principle is concerned, our observations will be understood not only as applicable to wild geese, but to

WILD DUCK, WIDGEON, AND TEAL SHOOTING.

Having reached the shore of the water which he purposes shooting, the young wild fowler will look out for his game, taking heed he himself is not observed. For this intent he should creep cautiously to the first spot commanding a view of the usual resorts of wild fowl. Let this be done with the minutest care, as the quarry he is looking for so nearly resembles the stones and tufts, and general covers they frequent, that he will find it very difficult to distinguish one from the other. Should he make out any water fowls afloat in shore, let him then, with his glass, scrutinise the margin of the lake or

stream, and mark well if anything be astir there. Should he find that there is, he may count on it being either ducks, widgeon, or teal. If his sport lie on streams or rivers, says Mr. Colquhoun, he will find it very unsatisfactory; as there are so many turnings and windings, which prevent his seeing the fowl until they are close at hand, and so many little bogs and creeks, where they conceal themselves beyond the possibility of detection, until the whiz of their wings, and the croak of the mallard, betray their hiding place.

This is no doubt true; but the chase of water fowl, in favourable circumstances, by running streams, particularly when there are preserves in the vicinity, is very pretty sport. Still it will be snap shooting to a certain extent, and chance shots only are to be reckoned on, while wild fowl stalking on open waters is more a matter of science; and of this we are treating. Having once got sight of the birds, the gunner knows that his game is within reach, and he goes about getting within shot of it. Let him search out some cover, through which he may shoot at them. In creeping to this shelter, if practicable, keep to leeward of them, for then there is less chance of their hearing or winding you. Having placed yourself within shot, fire at them sitting with one barrel, reserving the other to salute them when they rise, which they will do perpendicularly.

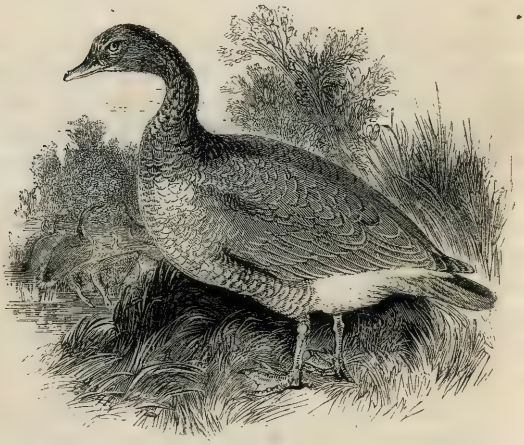
Ducks are far more wary and difficult of approach than widgeon or teal; so that in stalking the former

no precaution of silence or concealment should be lost sight of. The great art, too, is to get sitting shots, by which only a good account can be rendered of a flock of wild fowl. When so found, they are, for the most part, sleeping; as, for the purpose of feeding, they resort to marshes, fens, and swamps, on commons and moors. Their time for repose is the day; their period of flight the earliest dawn, and from twilight to dark at night.

These observations only apply to wild fowl shooting with a shoulder gun, in distinction to the modern invention of cannonading them on salt water with stanchion guns, introduced by Colonel Hawker—at least into the list of a gentleman's recreations. With this sport, as we have said, it is not our design to deal. It certainly does not come legitimately within the range of this work, which professes to treat of the rural enjoyments in which the gun is an agent; and not of the toil or business of slaughtering the birds of chase by wholesale,—for retail, by the hands of the metropolitan poulterer.

The taste for battue shooting, by sea or land, we would, under any circumstances, be loth to cater for. From it has sprung all the sin and sorrow to which our game laws have given existence; a system, when it is used as a stimulant of a morbid appetite, that promotes the very evil it was intended to remedy. The spirit of our field sports is to afford a wholesome pursuit, which shall link healthful exercise with manly habits; this new-fangled contrivance, the

battue, has overrun the land with a plague of pheasants and hares, and transformed the gentleman preserver into an amateur poultry butcher. When our bad game code shall be reformed, as it ought and must, a bad foreign fancy will be got rid of, and once again our woods and fields shall be sought by those who desire to take their RECREATIONS IN SHOOTING.



THE GREY LAG GOOSE.

The Wild Goose, or Grey Lag, of British authors (*Anas anser*).—This is but one of six wild species of geese that visit our islands in great quantities. Colonel Hawker thus specifies them:—The Bean Goose; a variety of the common one: The Bernacle; most common in Ireland and Scotland (and a smaller

bird): The Brent Goose; still less than the former: The Grey Lag: The Egyptian Goose; Ganser, or Gambo Goose: and the White-fronted, or Laughing Goose: besides the Red-breasted Siberian Goose,—a rare and very delicate species. There are also other varieties of this species, such as the Canadian, &c.; few, if any, of which, however, are visiters to

THE CANADIAN GOOSE.

our island. The wild geese fly in flocks, at very regular intervals of distance; either going in a line abreast, or in two lines, joining in an angle in the middle; in short, with mathematical precision they appear to select that figure which shall best stem the resistance of the air, and lessen their fatigues. By their manner of flying, also, they present as small a

mark as possible to the fowler or sportsman; and from the great height to which they rise, and the distances they maintain from each other, it is difficult, nay, almost impossible, to hit more than one at a time. The goose is remarkable for its fecundity, even in a wild state. The female hatches her eggs with great solicitude, and the male bird often drives her off, to take her place with a more noisy dignity. The wild goose seldom lays above eight eggs. It is known to live to a great age. Of the small brent goose Colonel Hawker remarks, that our late king, William the Fourth, esteemed it beyond other wild fowl. Of the Egyptian goose he thus relates:—"Two of these birds appeared, some years ago, in Norfolk; one of which was killed by John Ponton, Esq., and the other by his keeper. Three Egyptian geese were, for some days, in the winter of 1823, in the fields of Longparish; and after being fired at about ten times, the old gander was killed by one of the labourers. I was informed that they were at first so easy of access, that I then concluded they must have taken flight from some gentleman's pond. The next year again, during the tremendous gales from the *west*, a flock of about eighty appeared near the same place: and two more were killed and sent me by the same man. I have, therefore, no doubt of their importation, instead of emigration, to this country. I suppose these birds were, till of late years, very scarce, as Mr. Bewick has no specimen of them." The laughing geese (*Anas albifrons*) have

only been known to the sportsman of our islands for some years—Hawker asserts since the frost of 1830, when a flock of eighty of them alighted on a field near the village of Milford.

The cry of the goose is frequently heard when we cannot catch the least sight of the flock overhead; it seems to pass from one to another, like the bleat of the sheep, or the bay of the hound in pursuit. It is seldom heard when they alight. The bird is too well known for any specification of its plumage or internal conformation.

Notwithstanding the royal authority in favour of the brent variety of this unsavoury fowl, our palate gives preference over all the race to the Wexford species, called by the natives the "barnacle." This bird frequents the coast of Ireland, from Bray Head to Sligo Bay, in vast quantities. The country people cook it by all conceivable and inconceivable contrivances, and it is eaten at breakfast at the houses of the gentry done into a *pâté*. After too much wine overnight (which, from Bray Head to Sligo Bay, and thence to Wexford again, is a consequence of course) it is really a most delicious relish. This may seem a quaint style of doing a natural history notice, but allowance must be made for the subject. "Who drives fat oxen," &c., the benevolent reader will apply *à propos* of goose-ology. It is fit to say, however, that in the affair of gastronomy, the wild goose is no doubt a non-descript, belonging neither to the *genus* "flesh, fish, or good red herring." The most amusing

natural historian in the world thus speaks of his obligations to this bird:—"A young goose is generally reckoned very good eating, yet the feathers of this bird still increase its value. I feel my obligations to this animal every word I write, for however deficient a man's head may be, his pen is nimble enough upon every occasion; it is happy, indeed, for poor authors, that it requires no great effort to put it in motion. But the feathers of this bird are still as valuable in another capacity, as they make the softest and the warmest beds to sleep on."

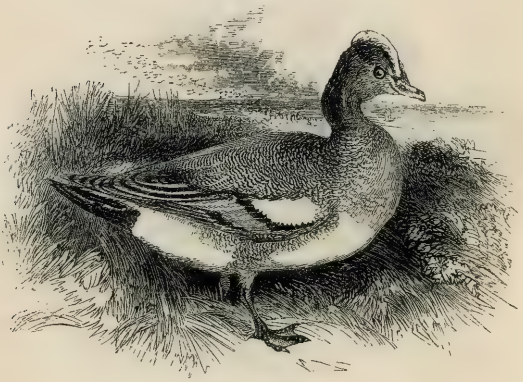
Of goose feathers most of our beds in Europe are composed (or supposed to be by convention); in the countries bordering on the Levant, and in all Asia, the use of them is unknown. How it happens that the ancients had not the use of feather-beds, is surprising. Pliny tells us, indeed, that they made bolsters of feathers to lay their heads on; and this serves as a proof that they turned feathers to no other uses. As good feathers are a very valuable commodity, great numbers of geese are kept tame in the fens of Lincolnshire, which are plucked once or twice a year. The feathers of Somersetshire are most in esteem; those of Ireland are reckoned the worst. Hudson's Bay also furnishes very fine feathers, supposed to be of the same kind. The down of the swan is brought from Dantzic. The wild goose always retains the same marks. These marks are seldom found in the tame; but both invariably retain a white ring round their tail, which shows they are both descended from the

same original. Pliny describes the flight of the wild goose, its wonderful and harmony of accord; and remarks, that, "unlike the cranes and the storks, which journey in the obscurity of the night, the geese are seen pursuing their route in broad day."

THE WILD DUCK.

The Wild Duck (*Anas boschas*, Linn.). Among wild ducks the male is called the mallard, and the young birds, flappers. In size it is not equal to the tame duck. In plumage it differs but little from it. Its bill is yellow; its neck is adorned with the brightest grass green feathers, ending in a white ring. The most apparent distinction between the wild and tame species is, however, in the colour of the legs:

the wild duck's legs are black; those of the tame one, yellow. Those ducks which feed much in the sea-water, and dive, have a broad bill bending upwards, a large hind toe, and a long bluish tail; those which feed in plashes have bills narrower and straighter, and a tail sharply pointed. A few of the wild duck tribe, known to the sportsman as natives of our own



THE WIDGEON.

European dominions, may be thus enumerated:— First, the Mallard: the Dun-bird, or Packard, with the head and neck of a bright bay: the Widgeon, with a bill of lead colour, and the back feathers marked with narrow black and white wavy lines, and well known by its whistling sound: the Black Duck, or Scoter, or Black Diver (*Anas nigra*): the Burrough Duck, or Sheldrake: the Eider Duck (*Anas*

mollissima). Colonel Hawker says of this duck; "The only three I ever heard of on the Hampshire coast, appeared in a late severe winter; I stopped them all, though I got but one, as the other two beat me in a sea." The Ferruginous Duck (*Anas rutila*): the Golden Eye (*Anas clangula*): the Grey Duck, or Gadwall (*Anas strepera*): the Longtailed Duck, or

THE SHELDRAKE, BURROUGH DUCK.

Swallow-tailed Sheldrake (*Anas glacialis*): the Pintailed Duck, Winter Duck, Sea Pheasant, or Cracker (*Anas acuta*): the Scaup Duck (*Anas marila*): the Shoveller, Kertlutock, or Broad-billed Duck (*Anas clypeata*): the Tufted Duck (*Anas fuligula*): the Velvet Duck, or Double Scoter (*Anas fusca*): besides other varieties.

As these live much in the same manner as the

domestic ducks, we shall only briefly touch upon them. They resort together in flocks during the winter, and fly in pairs during the summer. The velvet ducks are seen more in summer than in winter. Ducks' nests are constructed easily, among heath and rushes of their favourite localities, not far from the water; where they will lay twelve or fourteen eggs before they sit: the hen remains on them about thirty days, when the birds burst forth to take their first tumble in the water. An old duck is often a cunning bird, and will make her nest a considerable distance from the water for safety; she has been known to do so upon an oak tree, five and twenty feet from the ground: a perilous proceeding for the young birds, whose wing feathers are of the slowest growth. Here they were dependent on the tenderness of their parent, to convey them, in her beak or feet, to the water, their necessary element. Wild ducks breed with us, but not in great quantities. The gamekeepers of Mr. Eyre, of Passop, Derbyshire, in 1801, observed a wild duck fly out of a large oak, in which, the year preceding, there was a hawk's nest; the nest was found to be in complete repair, and contained two eggs recently laid by the duck in it.

The nest, whether high or low, is composed of singular materials. The longest grass, mixed with heath, and lined within with the bird's own feathers, will sometimes be the composition; although, in proportion to the climate, the nest is more or less artificially made. The duck in the Arctic regions will

form itself a cavity to lay in, the approach of which it carefully shelters; lines it first with a layer of clay and grass, then with moss, then with feathers or down. The eider duck, which is about twice as large as the common duck, makes her nest among the rocks or plants of the sea-shore; where, after lining the nest like others of the species, she will add to it a luxurious covering, plucked from the soft inner down of her own breast. This valuable tapestry-work the natives hunt for, and carry away with nest and eggs; when the indefatigable bird will immediately set about another, of which she is again robbed: the third time she still builds, but her eider down is exhausted, and the drake supplies the loss with his own. If this also is carried away, both birds forsake the place, and breed there no more. We find the flesh of those that migrate to us, not nearly so high flavoured as those that breed here. The wild duck at your table that eats loose, rancid, and fishy, you may assuredly take for a foreign traveller, whose food, by the way of waters, was fish. They love to choose a lake in the neighbourhood of woods, with a marsh at one side; and if a couple of them once alight, hundreds, allured by the constant call peculiar to this tribe, will flock to the same spot. The windpipe of the duck, where it begins to enter the lungs, opens into a kind of bony cavity, where the sound is reflected, as in a great musical instrument. Wild ducks generally choose that part of the lake where they are inaccessible to the

approach of the fowler. Here, in multitudes, and long before the season for courtship, they will be hurrying and scrambling about the whole day,—never at rest; but, as if holding a general council of ways and means, there they are, in the middle of the lake, now up, now down, always busy, and always loud; going off at night time to feed in the woods or ditches, or to adjacent meadows: they are too wary to approach in the day time.

In Norfolk, the shoveller duck is called, provincially, beck, or scopper-bill. They breed in this county. Colonel Hawker says, "that the flappers of this species are easier found, and show more sport, than those of the common wild duck. Their flesh, too, is of superior flavour. There is a variety of this kind, called the Red-breasted Shoveller; for which, as well as all other varieties of wild fowl, I have found the coast of Norfolk to be the best. This, no doubt, is in consequence of its being nearest to Holland; from whence there are driven across the channel, by a strong easterly wind, many birds that will seldom travel farther to the westward." The birds brought principally to the London poulterers' shops, are the packards or dunbirds, taken in immense numbers by decoy, of which we subjoin the account given by Mr. Daniel:—"The packard, or dunbird, is about the size of a widgeon, weighs one pound twelve ounces; its length is nineteen inches, breadth, two feet and a half; the bill is broader than the widgeon's, of a deep lead colour, with a black tip;

irides, orange; the head and neck deep chesnut, with a small triangular spot of white under the centre of the lower mandible; the lower part of the neck and breast, and upper part of the back, dusky black; scapulars and wing-coverts, nearest the body, of a greyish white, elegantly marked with narrow lines of black; the exterior wing-coverts and belly, ash coloured and brown; vent feathers and coverts of tail, black; the tail consists of short feathers, twelve in number, of a deep grey; the legs, lead coloured; secondary quill feathers, regularly edged with a stripe of white. The female has the head of a pale reddish brown; the breast is rather of a deeper colour; wing-coverts and belly cinereous; the back marked like that of the male. They are excellent eating. A decoy for dunbirds is called a flight-pond, and has nets fastened to tall stout poles, twenty-eight or thirty feet long; at the bottom of each pole is a box fixed, filled with heavy stones, sufficient to elevate the poles and nets the instant an iron pin is withdrawn, which retains the nets and poles flat upon the reeds, small willow boughs, or furze. Withinside the nets are small pens, made of reeds, about three feet high, for the reception of birds that strike against the nets, and fall down; and such is the form and shortness of wing in the packards, that they cannot ascend again from these little enclosures if they would; besides, the numbers, which are usually knocked into these pens, preclude all chance of escape from them by the wing. A decoyman will sometimes allow the haunt

of dunbirds to be so great, that the whole surface of the pond shall be covered with them, previous to his attempting to take one. Upon such occasions, he bespeaks all the assistants he can get to complete the slaughter by breaking their necks. When all is ready, the dunbirds are roused from the pond, and as all wild fowl rise against the wind, the poles in that quarter are unpinned, and fly up with the nets at the instant the dunbirds begin to leave the surface of the water, so as to meet them in their first ascent, and they are thus beat down by hundreds."

The other method, of French origin, is the decoy-duck system; where the fowler provides himself with a number of mallards, made tame. If the wild fowl are in a state of sleepiness, they will not follow the call of the decoys towards the nets (like that in which fish are caught in weirs). In such case, a little dog is brought into requisition. He passes backward and forward between the reed hedges, in which there are little holes, both for the decoy man to see, and for the little dog to pass through. This attracts the eye of the wild fowl, who, prompted by curiosity, advance towards this little animal, while he, all the time, keeps playing among the reeds, nearer and nearer the funnels (covered over by the sticks and nets), till they follow him too far to recede. Sometimes the dog will not attract their attention, till a red handkerchief, or something as attractive, be put about him. The decoy ducks are taught to dive under the water as soon as the rest are driven in.

Thousands on thousands are brought to market by these modes.

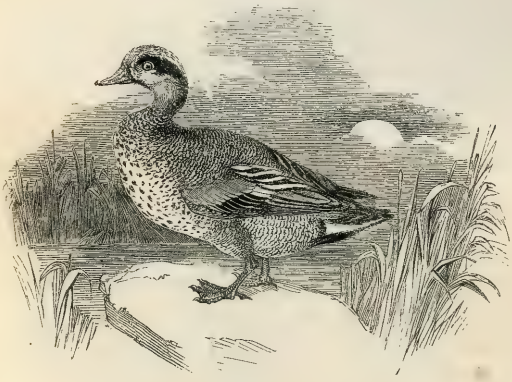
While speaking of ancient and modern modes of decoy, we cannot avoid taking notice of that which is said to be the Chinese method of ensnaring these birds: it equals the French decoys for ingenuity. The Italian method, of putting out their eyes, is too cruel for our English habits; but this Chinese method might be followed without detriment to humanity. Whenever the fowler sees a number of ducks settled in any particular plash of water, he sends off two or three gourds to float among them. These gourds, being made hollow, swim on the surface of the water; and on one pool there may be sometimes seen twenty or thirty of them. The fowl are at first a little shy of coming near, but by degrees they approach, and, as birds grow familiar with scarecrows, so the ducks gather around the gourds, and amuse themselves by whetting their bills against them. At last the fowler is satisfied he can deceive them. He puts his head into one of these hollow gourds, and, making holes to breathe and see through, he wades slowly into the water, keeping his body under, and nothing but his head, gourd-accoutred, above its surface. He thus gets in among the wild-fowl, while they, long used to see gourds, take not the least fright while the enemy is in the midst of them; and an insidious enemy he is, for ever as he approaches a fowl, he seizes it by the legs, and jerks it under the water; there he fastens

it under his girdle, and goes to the next, till he has loaded himself. When he has got his quantity, without ever attempting to disturb the rest of the fowls on the pool, he slowly moves off again; and in this manner pays the flock a visit several times in the day. This, if true, is by no means a wholesale method of duck murder, and so far to be approved of.

The young reader will find, in Col. Hawker's industrious experiences, some useful hints on wild duck shooting. For our parts, we have not been without our attachment to the diversion. Give us, in any part of the world, in the eastern counties of our own country, in France, or amid the hills of Scotland, where the tarns lie like oases among the hills—some far-off solitary pool, or marshy lake—clear water only in the centre, reeds and rushes thickly bristling round—there might we not hope to see flappers plentiful as frogs: duck, teal, widgeon—who knows?—wild geese and swans—from our crouching station: and there might we not again, amidst the ducking, and diving, and gobbling, and bustle, of a first arrival, do execution as of yore.

The Teal (*Anas crecca*, Linn.).—This, the smallest of the duck species, is also the most delicate and the most esteemed. It is, unfortunately, more rare than the others, but the numbers that come to this country vary greatly from season to season. The teal weighs about twelve ounces or more, and may measure about fifteen inches in length. The male bird has the handsomest plumage, according to the received standard of

beauty among the feathered tribe. The bill is black; the head and upper parts of the neck are of a bright bay; the whole markings of its head and wings are very splendid. The female has the same beautiful green patch on her wings as the male bird. A few of these birds breed with us. Some years back great numbers were taken in decoys, but the amount is



THE TEAL.

much reduced of late. The internal structure of this bird is peculiar: it has convolutions at the end of the windpipe, adapted, as it is said, to the peculiar sounds it emits. This is also the case of many others of the wild fowl tribe, as we have mentioned in our account of the wild swan and goose. The teal's nest is formed of rushes, and lined with down, and so placed as to swing to, and rise and fall with, the motions of

the wind and water. Some authors speak of varieties of this bird as summer teal, &c. Buffon is clearly wrong in his description of a bird, of a much greater size, in classing it as a teal. Its eggs are of the size of those of the pigeon; they are white, with brown spots. The teal decoy used to be made after this recipe:—Where a pond, environed by a wood, is found, the decoy is to be raised. This should be planted round with willows, if possible (in the event of the wood not clothing it sufficiently). Three or four pipes, or channels are then to be dug, broad towards the pond, and verging, point-like, towards the end. These are to be covered with nets, supported by hooped sticks, bending from one side to another, and so forming a sort of archway, or vault, gradually growing narrower to the point at which it is terminated by a tunnel net; reed hedges, should slant to the edges of the pipes or channels, which are thus hidden from the sight, and behind which the fowler places himself, to pursue his operation. When the wild fowl come down at night to feed, the decoy whistle is raised; the decoy is covered with teal, brought thither by the fowler's art, who has scattered the nets over with hemp seed, &c. The decoy ducks begin to pick up the grain, and the wild fowl quickly imitate their example, and thus are secured in the net,—the fowler burning a piece of turf at his nose, that their exquisite sense of smelling may not put them on guard. In frosty weather these birds come together in flocks of from twenty to thirty, but are generally found

scattered. Even birds of one family seldom keep long together. The flight of the teal, when flushed, it rarely high: it skims along the pool, and gives the gunner a fair chance. It is no difficult matter to get near, but you are apt to lose sight of him without a close and sharp look out, as he often flies away altogether. Colonel Hawker says, "Of all the prizes that a wild fowl shooter could wish to meet with, a flock of teal is the very first;" and for that reason, probably, it is becoming one of the rarest in the lottery of WILD FOWL SHOOTING.